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NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX

FIERY INSIGHT

15 DRAGON ART TIPS

Easy ways to create fantastic beasts

RUDE ADVICE

HOW TO GIVE ART CRITIQUES

FEATURING

LOÏC ZIMMERMANN
SARAH ROBINSON
PASCAL BLANCHÉ
DAVE RAPOZA
AND MORE

INTERVIEW

JASON RAINVILLE

On how he injects drama into every painting

NEW WAYS WITH COLOUR & LIGHT

Create a fresh look in your art, with in-depth colour palette advice

DISCOVER

TRADITIONAL ART TECHNIQUES

Start your plein air journey

Future

INSIDE!

MIXER BRUSH TIPS IN PHOTOSHOP
PAINT ON THE GO WITH PROCREATE
DRAW MEPHISTO WITH INTRICATE LINE ART

Welcome to...

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

Phew! This issue has been a pleasure to put together and I'm so pleased with how it's turned out. I'm always so impressed with the techniques and inspiration each artist has to share with you.

While you're here it's worth reminding you that you could save a bundle of money by subscribing to ImagineFX. See below right for the latest offers in time for Christmas, or if you're reading this outside the UK, you'll be just in time for the January sales!

In other news, our sister magazines 3D World and 3D Artist have launched an exciting 3D art event! There's a teaser over on page 60, or you can visit **www.vertexconf.com** to get the latest news on the gathering in London next year.

Finally, we've featured so many amazing artists in our FXPosé section of late. Why not add your name to this list? Just send in up to five images of either traditional or digital art, along with their titles and a short explanation of how or why you created it. Add in a little biography, a photo of you and then email it directly to fxpose@imaginefx.com. We've got some really exciting editions coming up, so it would be great if you could be a part of them!

Claire

Claire Howlett, Editor
claire@imaginefx.com

EDITOR'S CHOICE Three of my top picks this month...

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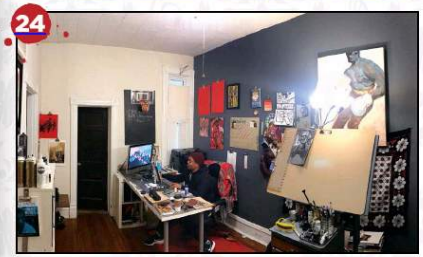

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The gift that keeps on giving
Subscribe to ImagineFX for yourself, or give it as a gift for someone else! You won't regret it.

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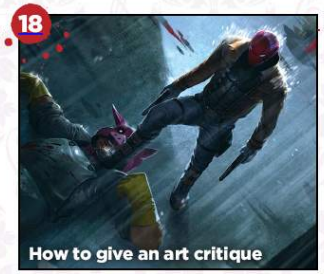
JASON RAINVILLE

"Thinking about what may or may not sell causes me a bit of anxiety"
Jason takes care of business

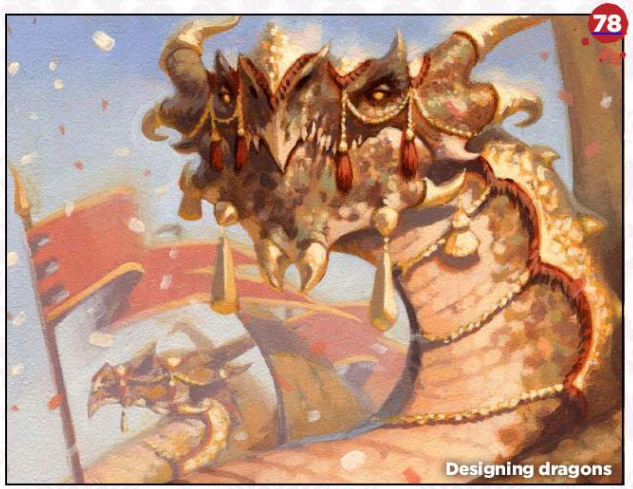


How to give an art critique

Artist in Residence: Chris Visions

Lorena Lammer

Fairy tale scene



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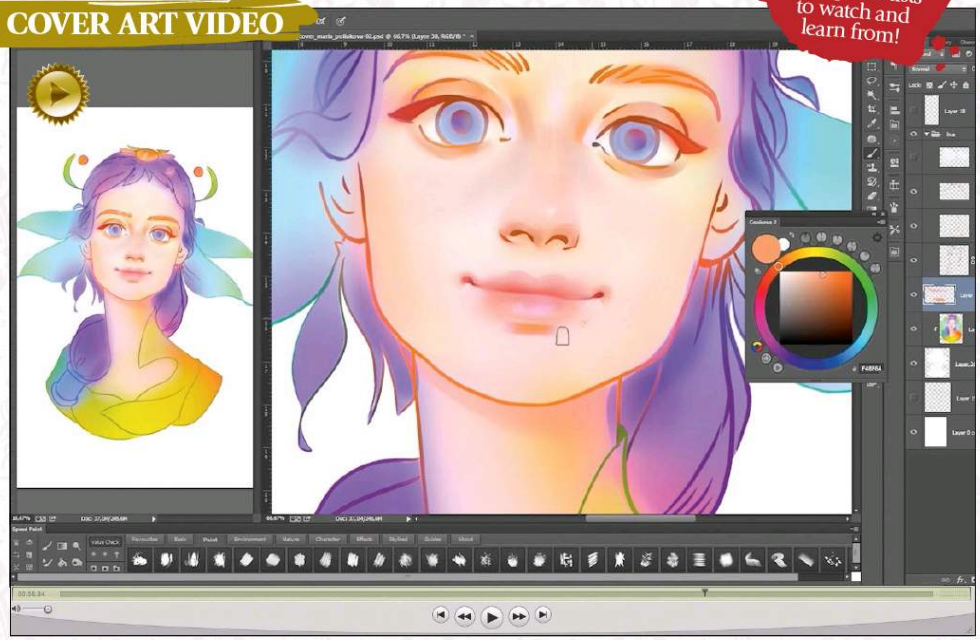
Resources

Getting hold of all of this issue's videos and custom brushes is quick and easy. Just visit our dedicated web page at **http://ifxm.ag/colour156light**

OVER 2 HOURS of video tutorials from pro artists to watch and learn from!

COVER ART VIDEO



GET YOUR RESOURCES

You're three steps away from this issue's resource files...

1 Go to the website
Type this into your browser's address bar (not the search bar): **http://ifxm.ag/colour156light**

2 Find the files you want
Search through the list of resources to watch or download.

3 Download what you need
You can download all of the files at once, or individually.

Colour and light tools in Photoshop

Over on page 62 you'll get an insight into how cover artist Maria Poliakova approached her gorgeous cover painting, using colour to great effect. Be sure to watch her workshop video, too.

PLUS MORE VIDEO TUITION!

Watch our videos to gain a unique insight into how our artists create their stunning art

WORKSHOP VIDEO

Get better at using Procreate
Watch how Chrissie Zullo puts the app through its paces as she paints Snow White, then turn to page 70 for her workshop.

The devil's in the line art
MrHass produces his own take on the Faust tale in black ink. See his art in action in his video, and read more by turning to page 104.

TRAINING

Creating Key Art Illustration for Film and Games
Alex Nice composes a dramatic scene in his instructional video. We review it on page 95.

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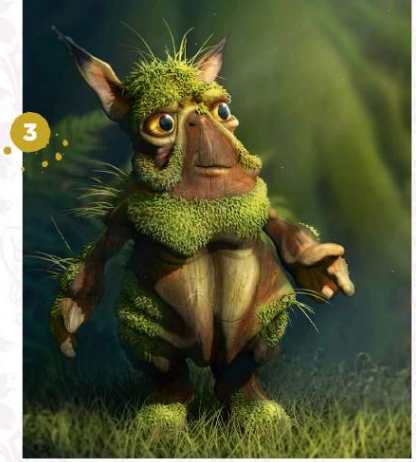
FXPosé

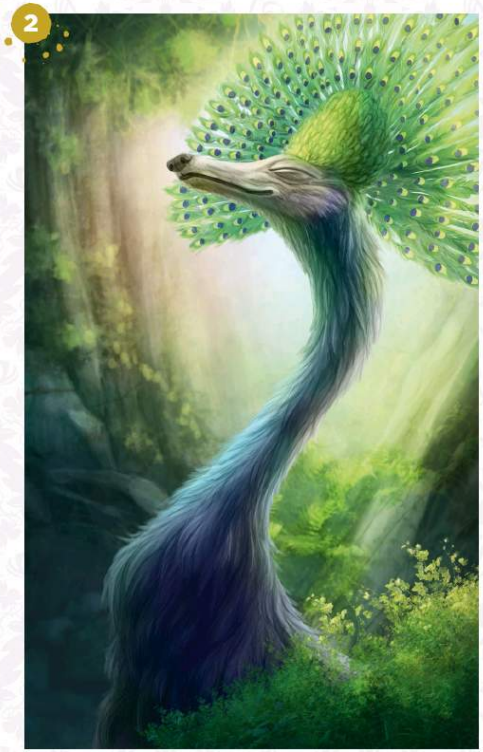
THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



Kaya Oldaker

LOCATION: England **MEDIA:** Photoshop, ZBrush **WEB:** http://ifxm.ag/kaya-o

Kaya's work features absurd, almost surrealist fantasy. "I create a lot of colourful and weird creature designs for the various stories I'm working on," she says.



1 SIMPLER TIMES
"A character from The Increasingly Absurd Endeavours of Gretchen Goosander. He's called Mumbeltrousse, and he's a young honey dragon.

2 TALL AND PRETTY
"A lot of my creature designs are bizarre, fantastical and extravagant. My creative philosophy is the more absurd and colourful, the better."

3 HOBBLER TROLL
"This was the second time that I ever used ZBrush. I combined photo manipulation and digital painting to create a more realistic-looking creature."

4 WHITE PEAFOX
"A personal favourite of mine. It incorporates everything I love putting in a drawing, including vibrant, glowing colours and a fantastical creature design."

Email your submissions to fxpose@imaginefx.com

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FXPosé

1

1 DRUID
"I wanted to create a melee-based druid concept based on the bark skin spell from Dungeons & Dragons."

2

2 ZERKER
"Most of my characters start in my sketchbook, then get worked in Photoshop. After I get a base design I'm happy with, it's into ZBrush for sculpting and poly painting, then finally into Maya to turn it into a model."

Michael Nicholson

LOCATION: Scotland **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Maya, ZBrush, Marmoset **WEB:** http://mnicholson-arts.myportfolio.com

Michael is a freelance artist working in the games industry. "From a young age I was always creating my own characters – and now I have the most fun taking them from paper to 3D models," he says.

3

3 OWLIN
"This was a character based on a NPC I made for my D&D group. I've always loved the shape of owls and how they have the connotations of wise creatures."

4

4 SONIC RACER
"In this early ZBrush piece, I wanted to push the idea of a jogger taking things to the next level."

5

5 FEORN
"Most of my characters start out as a quick sketch. Then I work into the design and take it through the process of turning it into an in-engine model."

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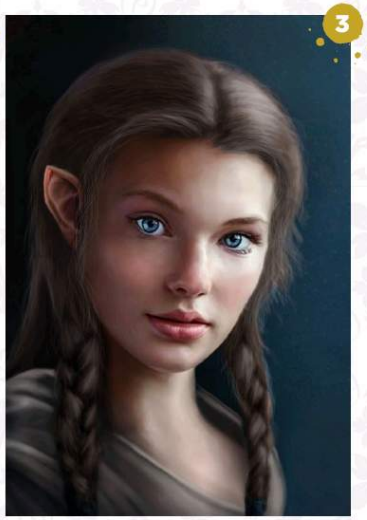
Matias Silorinne

LOCATION: Finland MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: www.ratuska.fi/Myllah/index.php

"Finding art has given me the chance to do something meaningful," says Matias. "I still struggle at times, but I've come to appreciate the creative process and the uncertainness that's part of it."

1 FANTASY LANDSCAPE
"This landscape sits somewhere between good and evil. There's always a battle between the two."

2 FACELESS LADY
"This painting was inspired by a nightmare – this lady was chasing me all around the house. It was scary. I got killed in the end of that dream."



3 ELF LADY
"This was inspired of The Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit. Elves are my weakness and passion – I just love them and the lore behind them. Who doesn't?"

Email your submissions to fxpose@imaginefx.com

Gina Nelson

LOCATION: England MEDIA: Photoshop
WEB: www.ginanelsonart.com

Gina is a self-taught artist from South Africa who's leading the art team at London mobile games studio The Secret Police. In her spare time she works on personal illustrations, both traditionally and digitally.

1 BIRDIE
"I wanted to create something beautiful and strange that was both human and not human. This piece gave me the opportunity to study feathers and wings. I had such fun with it."

Email your submissions to fxpose@imaginefx.com

Sheeba Maya

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.sheebamaya.com

Sheeba likes to combine African culture with fantasy elements. "I'm inspired by my own spiritual journey, a love of nature and all things mystical," she says.

1 LEO
"The headdresses for each piece is meant to honour the spirit of the animal. I had a lot of fun capturing the furry texture for this one!"

2 VIRGO
"Each goddess has a small animal companion. This one is a little hard to find but that's okay since it's a chameleon! I like to add things for the viewer to discover."

3 TAURUS
"I'm obsessed with texture. I want the viewer to feel the softness of the feathers, the smoothness of the horns and the cool touch of the metal chains."

4 ARIES
"As the genesis of the series, Aries really set the tone for the subsequent paintings. My aim was to capture the magical nature of the goddess."

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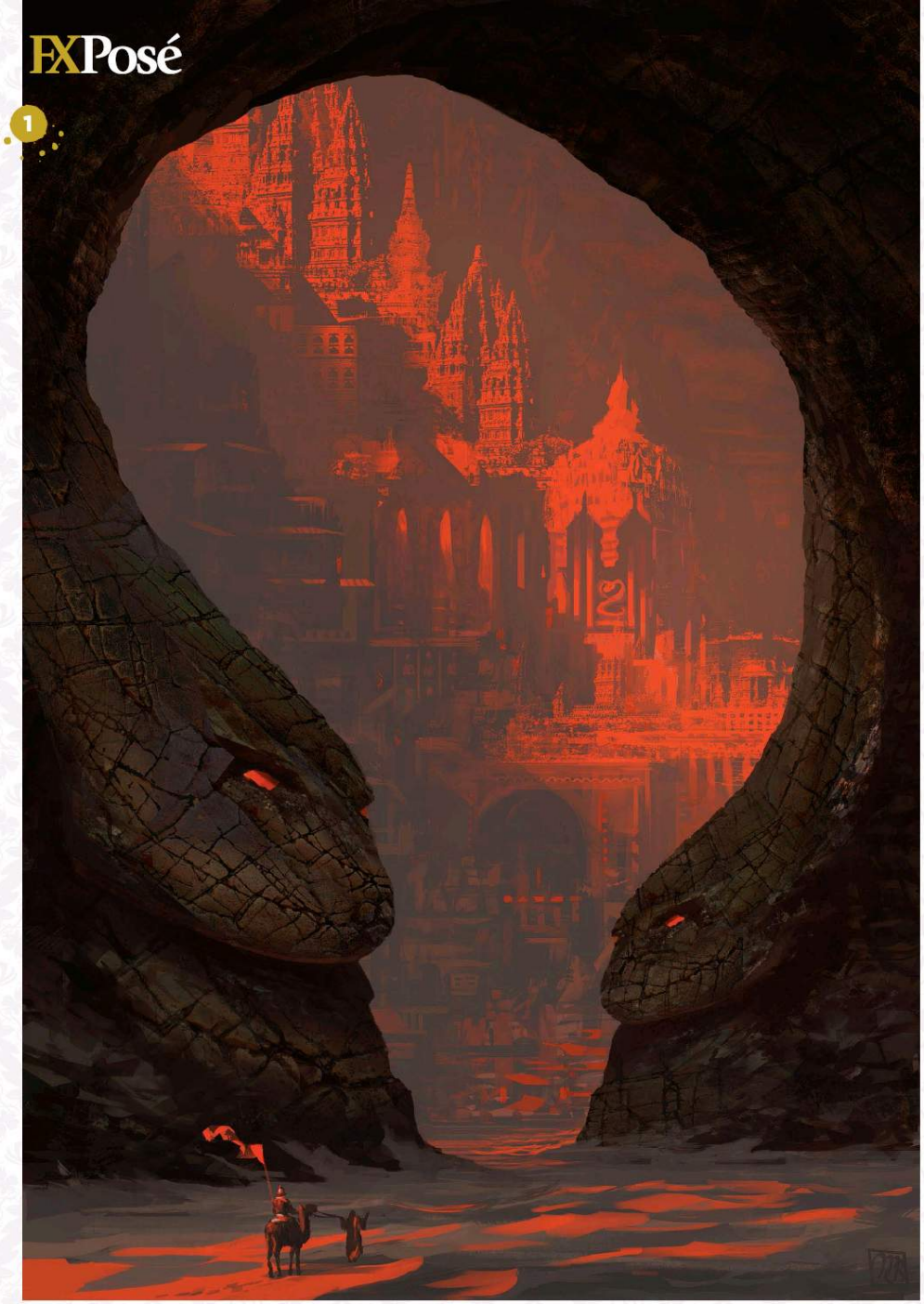
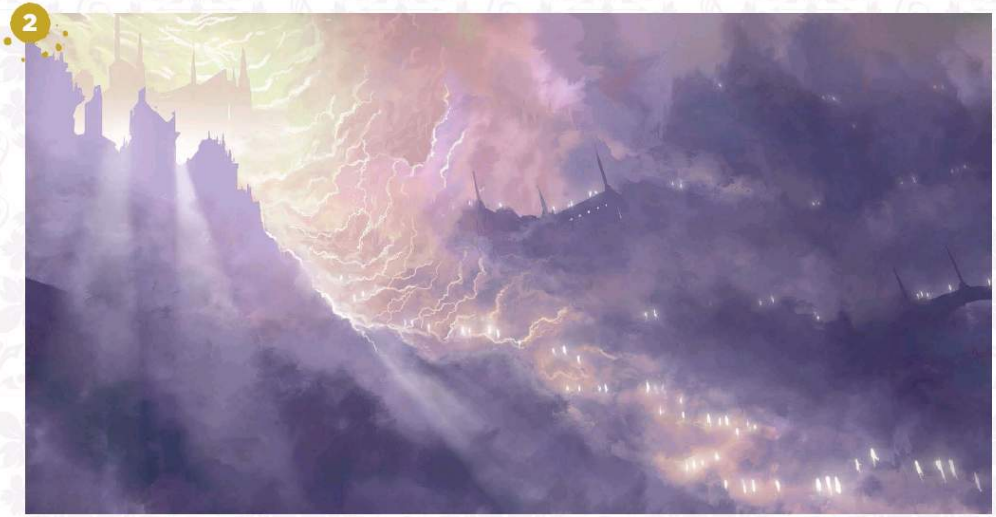
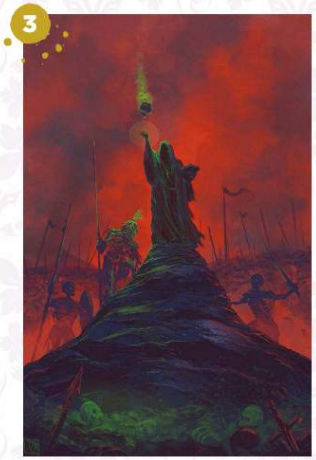


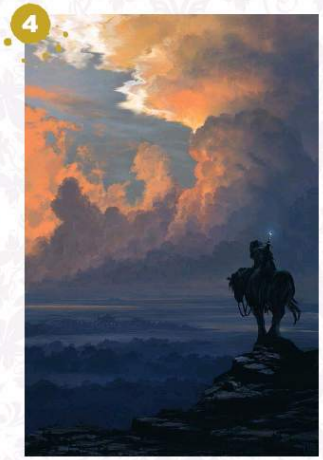
Matthew Sellers

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: www.matthewsellers.com

"I've been creating art ever since I could say 'Crayola'," reveals illustrator and concept artist Matthew. Early inspirations included Tolkien's literature, music of The Police and Larry Elmore.







1 **SERPENT'S KEYHOLE**
"As a concept artist, I strive to create exotic, strange locales never before imagined. It's a joy to paint a piece that conveys uniqueness."

2 **FINAL DESTINATION**
"My feeble attempt at capturing what the afterlife might be like. I wanted this to be extremely atmospheric, with just the right balance between light and dark."

3 **DRY BONES – COME ALIVE!**
"I wanted to take an ancient biblical story and resurrect it using fantasy elements. Dramatic lighting and composition brings the viewer's focus on the central character."

4 **STRANGER FROM THE NORTH**
"This was created for a book cover. My goal was to paint a piece that told a story through a single image. It shows the iconic weary traveller at journey's end – or is it at the beginning...?"

Do you want to see your art on these pages? Then email five pieces of your work and a short explanation about each artwork, along with a photo and a few details about yourself, to **fxpose@imaginefx.com**

Email your submissions to fxpose@imaginefx.com

SMASHING IT
Video games artist Anna Hollinrake's work on the VR title Lola And the Giant won her a BAFTA Breakthrough Brit award. We find out what it means to be an award winner.
Page 23

VISION ON
Step inside the inspirational space of comic artist Chris Visions, whose studio is a visual stream of consciousness that helps him to paint his vivid artworks.
Page 24

LIGHT WORK
Dave Brasgalla gives a succinct masterclass in depicting rim lighting – and what to avoid – in our Q&A section. While Chris Rathbone reveals how he creates custom brushes in Illustrator.
Page 30

"Giving a critique is a challenging but rewarding process," says Pascal Blanché.

Concept art for Injustice 2 by Drew Whitmore. "Peer feedback is invaluable as everyone loses perspective on their own work," says Drew

©NetherRealm Studios

How to give out useful art critiques

Part two What's the best way to helpfully comment on another artist's work? **Tom May** asks industry experts for insight and advice

Working as a professional artist, you're often asked to critique other artists' work. But as we noted in last issue's article on how to receive a critique, no one likes hearing negative views of their art. So how do you go about it?

While diplomacy is key, soft-soaping the truth is not an option, says **Sarah Robinson**, creative director for Paizo in Seattle, who regularly reviews other artists' work at conventions. "Hearing the truth is what helps," she points out. "We all want to get better, and if we're told that we're awesome all the time, then there's no chance of going to the next level."

Dave Rapoza, an artist for games and films who's just launched his own comic, entitled Steve Lichman, agrees.

"You don't do anyone a service by holding back," he says. "People are looking for someone to be honest. Remember, they're asking for critique. If they want compliments instead, they need to make that clear."

"A critique shouldn't be just one way," says Loïc Zimmermann. "It's a dialogue."

Neither, though, should you simply

spit out your own personal views of the work, says **Loïc Zimmermann**, art director of MPC and a teacher at Gnomon. "It's not about you and whether you like the art or not. That's not relevant," he explains. "It's about what is the

INDUSTRY INSIGHT
PASCAL BLANCHÉ

The veteran games artist explains how he goes about giving out crits

How do you go about critiquing other artists?
I try to understand the process the artist has followed from start to finish and offer suggestions for how to do it better, without being too prescriptive or interfering with their artistic vision.

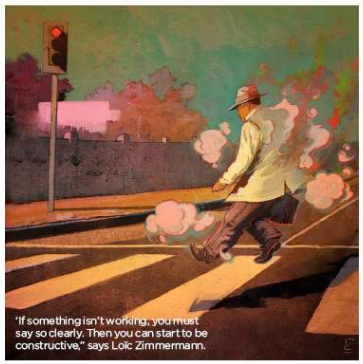
What are the secrets to giving constructive critique?
A clear brief before the work starts, with a well-defined goal, and (most of the time) suitable references. And then being as consistent as possible regarding the brief when I give my critiques. The clearer the path, the better the critique will be understood.

How do you avoid being purely subjective in your critique?
I try to stick with the intention as much as I can. I use references and moodboards, but I also respect the artist's vision and their interpretation of the subject. If I feel it isn't going where I expected it to, I try to understand what the artist saw in the task that I didn't, and get more into exchanging ideas and brainstorming. It's always fun to see where this goes.

How do you avoid damaging the artist's "inner voice"?
It's tricky to give good and clear directions without being too directive! Most of the time when there's friction, it's a sign that I have to explain my 'grand design' better. Once we're on the same page it's easier for the artist to express themselves, and let them be more in control of their work.

Having spent more than 20 years working in the games industry, Pascal is senior art director at Ubisoft Montreal.

www.behance.net/derelictplanet



"If something isn't working, you must say so clearly. Then you can start to be constructive," says Loïc Zimmermann.

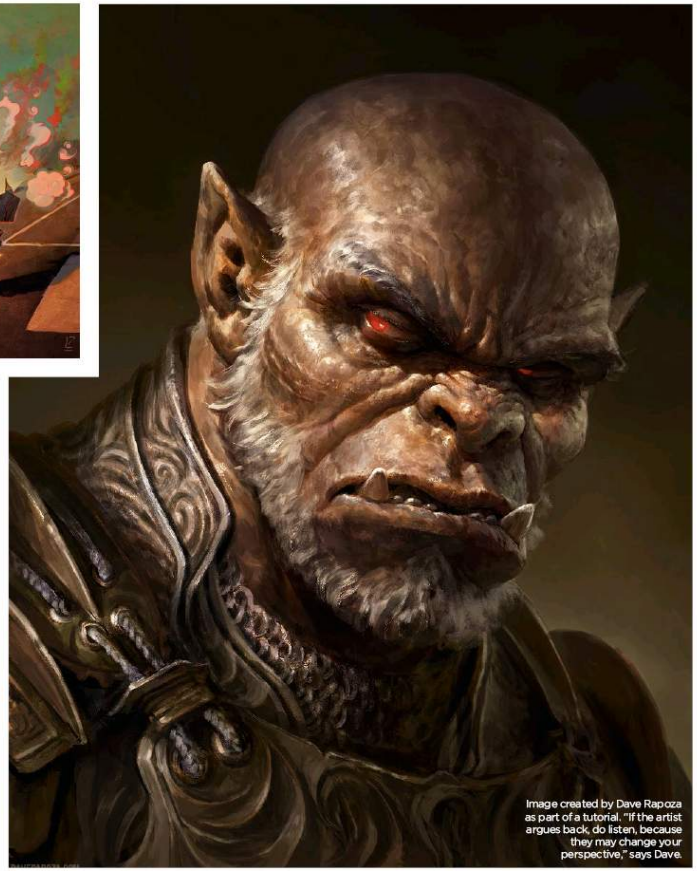


Image created by Dave Rapoza as part of a tutorial. "If the artist argues back, do listen, because they may change your perspective," says Dave.

artist trying to do, and how well they're working towards that goal."

"A critique requires you to do more than just look at the art; it's about understanding the ambitions behind it," agrees American artist **Daniel Warren**, who's recently been working with Dave Rapoza on Steve Lichman. Daniel used to critique artists regularly online via Livestream and Twitch, and still does so for those who reach out via email. "I typically try to first identify what field they're trying to get into," he explains. "Concept art? Book illustration? Comics? And then I frame the crit around the needs and requirements of getting into that field."

This way, there's a better chance of your critique hitting home, he adds. "It shows them that you actually took the time to observe their work and aren't just giving them the boilerplate responses you give to everyone who asks for help."

GIVE YOURSELF TIME TO REPLY

Drew Whitmore, a principal artist at Atomhawk, agrees that taking your time is key. "Don't immediately jump into critique," he advises. "Looking at their image a couple of times, with some time in between, gives you a better view of what the issues are," he advises. And try to be constructive rather than just narrowly critical. "Always try to have a proposed solution," Drew stresses. "Point out what you think is wrong and why, and then what you think they should do about it. If you don't have a solution off-hand, it's good to discuss it with the artist, and ask them a bunch of questions. Often, they'll think of a good solution themselves."

To make sure you don't slide too far into negativity, Daniel recommends the 'crit sandwich'. "The formula is 'positive, negative, positive'," he explains. "It's very important to remember that critique is not just negatives. Identifying what works, and the strengths, is equally important. So, for every two areas of weakness, try to find an area of strength. For example: 'The anatomy could use some work; specifically the proportions in the arms. The costume design is really great, though – it's unique and makes the character pop. Maybe bump up the lighting so that it showcases the outfit more.'"

Sarah Robinson art directed David Alvaraz on this piece for the RPG Starfinder. "I generally ask the person what kind of critique they're looking for," she says.

© Paizo

> "I frame the crit around the needs and requirements of getting into a certain field"

AGREEING ON CRIT LIMITS

Loïc adds that it's important from the outset to clarify with the artist exactly how open they are to criticism of their work. "So I usually ask: 'How far do you want me to go? Are you done with it and are asking politely, but ultimately you don't want to change a thing? Or this is something that you really want to improve?' I think that's a good place to start."

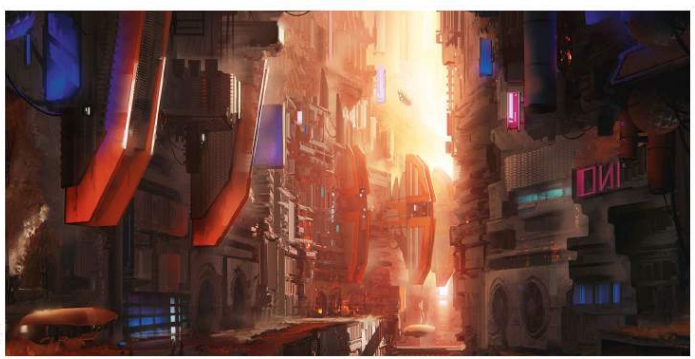
Bear in mind that there's no 'right' answer here: yours is a second opinion, not the be-all and end-all. "Apart from the low-hanging fruit around fundamentals, such as perspective, anatomy and lighting, a lot of stuff is very subjective," points out Drew. "With client work it gets easier because, hopefully, there's a clear direction coming from the client.

"With personal work, though, you need to consider where the artist is wanting to go. You can refer to other creatives who are successful at the thing this particular artist is trying to do as a jumping board for your feedback, so they know you're not trying to take them some place they don't want to go."

Art by Drew Whitmore. "Being able to give crits as well as receive them helps make both easier," he says.

Starfinder art by Setiawan Lie, as directed by Sarah Robinson. "At Paizo, I look at anatomy and composition first, then creativity," says Sarah.

© Paizo



© Paizo

Leon Tukker took direction from Paizo's Sarah Robinson for the Starfinder project. "All visual media are open for criticism," she says.

THINK BIG, NOT SMALL

It's important, too, to not get bogged down in details, says Daniel. "Stick to the three main problems you see in the work rather than overwhelm the person with every little thing you believe is wrong," he advises. "This serves to make the artist you're critiquing focus on the big, important issues and keeps them focused."

Above all, remember you're talking to a human being, so address them in the same friendly manner you'd like to be addressed yourself. "It's not just about what you say, but how you say it," says Dave. "The important thing is to convey why something isn't working and how to improve it; you don't have to be nasty about it. It's basically balance between the two people; both need to be sensitive to each other."

And Loïc is a great believer in a lightness of touch. "I think humour is something that works for everything in life," he says. "I start my class with anecdotes every time; it's like a way in. And you have to talk passionately about the good stuff. Then it's easier to say to them: 'So here, why did you screw it up? These parts are a very interesting direction, but you need to follow it the entire way through.'"

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When Anna heard she was nominated, she was so shocked that she had to lie down on the floor.

Anna is keen to develop a world of pastel witches, which she loves to draw.

Lola and the Giant images © Climax Studios

New British talent breaks through

Rising stars BAFTA's Breakthrough Brits celebrates the work of up-and-coming creatives, including ImagineFX artist Anna Hollinrake

Anna's work on VR game Lola and the Giant impressed the judges.

BAFTA is challenging the idea that it's 'who you know not what you know' when it comes to carving out a creative career with its annual Breakthrough Brits initiative. The scheme, which showcases and supports the most exciting new voices across film, games and television, has singled out ImagineFX contributor Anna Hollinrake among others as a worthy recipient.

"I feel both honoured and baffled!" says Anna, a games artist at Climax Studios in Portsmouth. "Making art can be a fundamentally solitary experience at times, and even when working in a studio it doesn't always feel like anyone else ever really sees it outside of your immediate team. Knowing that a panel of accomplished industry veterans saw and enjoyed my work is wonderfully affirming that I'm headed in the right direction."

Image courtesy of BAFTA/Jaimie Simonds

The whole group of the Breakthrough Brits recipients covers a wide range of talents.

As a Breakthrough Brit, Anna can expect to work with BAFTA to develop a bespoke programme of mentoring and career development support. "The whole programme is led by the individual honouree," explains Claire Stratton, events and legacy producer at BAFTA. "So, in some ways, they get out what they put in!

"Previous Breakthrough Brits have found business partners, met future collaborators, made new friends and forged long-term mentoring relationships through the programme." In Anna's case, she wants to build and expand her own IP and talk to a range of developers outside of her normal art sphere.

Fancy yourself as a 2018 Breakthrough Brit? It's free to enter – you just need to explain why you've made an impact over the past 12 months and how the programme could help you progress.

For more information about the scheme and this year's winners, visit **http://ifxm.ag/break-brits**.

I like to keep a photo of my mom in my art space, since my artist journey starts with her. She absolutely hates the photo, but I think she was stylin'. It also reminds me of all the dreams she had as a kid, and to hold on to my own.

Here is a stack of pages I just finished for Kelly Sue DeConnick and Valentine De Landro's BITCH PLANET. Initially, pages are pinned to the wall in sequence so I can see how the story flows in full.

Portrait of Jack Johnson I painted a few years back. It was for a gallery show I had in Richmond at Loose Screw Tattoo. I cranked out all 24x36 inches in a day. It was exhilarating rather than frustrating, but brings back good memories. And the subject is very close to me.

When I'm not at a convention, my banner hangs up in my studio. It always brings back the good vibes of shows, and it's special because it was my first banner. Soon I'll be using a new one and so this banner will stay in the studio. Hopefully, they can all hang one day like jerseys in an arena, but that's after I get a few rings installed first.

I've set up my digital workstation to feel like a cockpit of sorts. When I sit down I can easily fly right into my process, starting with the scanner in the corner. There, I scan my traditional work, which goes to my 27-inch Mac, enabling me to see details clearly. That's connected to my Cintiq Companion too, giving the feeling of working traditionally right into my computer.

I love the poetry of James Baldwin: "Who, indeed. I may be able to tell you who I am; but I am also discovering who I am not. I want to be an honest man. And I want to be a good writer. I don't know if one ever gets to be what one wants to be. You just have to play it by ear, and pray for rain."

Photograph by Tyler G Tucker

Chris Visions

Ideas Central The comic artist arranges his space like a stream of consciousness. Are you ready to dive in?

This is my creative space at home. Working outside the home is refreshing, but having a studio enables me to jump right into work, and cultivate a garden for my ideas.

I keep some of my favourite books in the studio, along with art supplies, a flat file for paper and previous work, a project wall, and a digital work centre for scanning, editing and creating art further. I've just put together a standing desk area with a drafting table from the trashpile, a bucket of paint and a thrift store nightstand. It's transforming into an area where I can do my livestreams again. ➤➤

A dear friend gifted the ALF lunchbox to me so now it's my art box. And this portrait of me was created by Cakes in North Carolina. It means a great deal to me.

Boxing has always fascinated me. These authentic gloves were a gift from my friend Stephen, and inspired a story that I'm currently writing. Oh, and Bishop says hi.

Sketching is like training for me: collecting observations and ideas and building them up into realised pieces. The ritual of keeping a sketchbook, being dedicated to it or even taking long hiatuses, teaches you a lot about yourself and where you're at. They serve as great markers to look back upon as well.

I'm currently creating a character on my wall. In the centre is the calendar, because everyone has a due date. I place tokens that I feel represent the character, along with photos of myself when I was younger. Naturally, the character will have parts of me in them, but it also feels like I'm watching them grow up. There's also art that's inspiring or has the feel of what I'm going for.

I have a Facebook/Twitch channel that I aired last year called VISIONS SEASON. It's something I'm retooling and looking forward to starting again.

I painted this studio area and one wall in raven's claw grey. This is a neutral colour that I can ground my palettes against and where my eyes can rest. My project wall is behind me, where I post pieces of paper I'm about to use, inspirational images, a large calender, and process and completed pieces. There's a clear view behind my standing desk to visually keep me on track as I draw and paint.

To my right stands my banner that I take to comic conventions. It features Léon and Matilda from Luc Besson's film The Professional. It's a piece dear to me not just because of the subject matter, but more so it was a piece I did solely from desire, and I saw techniques come from myself that I wanted to pursue further.

I remember how I moved the brush, how the marks felt as I painted the hairs on Jean Reno's chin, or how it felt when I decided to make Natalie Portman smaller in proportion – little things like that.

Also in the studio is my bookshelf, tea stand, and walls of other artists's work who I revere. It's good to have people to look up to.

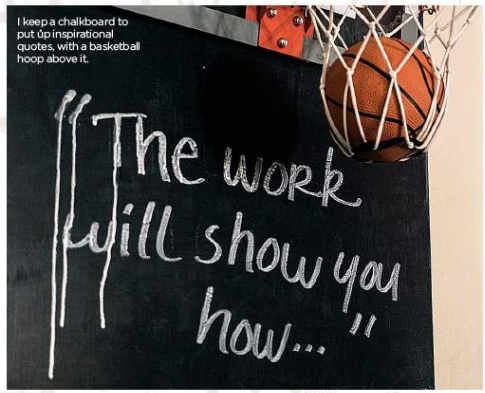
Chris is a Virginia-based illustrator working in comics. Keep track of his evolving art styles by visiting www.chrisvisions.com.

I keep a lot of art on my walls, and the most special piece has to be this one by my friend and mentor Kerry P Talbott. He was a dedicated cartoonist, father and teacher who taught at Virginia Commonwealth University. We lost him to cancer back in 2013, but his legacy lives on in a lot of students working professionally, including myself. This piece reminds me of him and his life's work.

My artist tray contains my go-to items for pencilling and inking. It contains a range of pens, pencils, traditional brushes, brush pens, water and ink. Everything a growing artist needs.

I like to keep all my spray cans and most of my supplies in order of the colour spectrum. Little ways to stay organised helps immensely, and also it's just so pretty! My cans sit under my original PULPHOPE print that was given to me by my friend Patrick. He owns Velocity Comics here in Richmond, which has been my comic book store since I've lived here.

My ruby-quartz visor is for when my visions get out of control and I have to contain them. Shout out to Charles for hooking me up with these – it really helps when I go out in public. All my red series was drawn with these firmly in place.



I keep a chalkboard to put up inspirational quotes, with a basketball hoop above it.

"It was a piece I did solely from desire, and I saw techniques that I wanted to pursue further"

This cover was one of my favourites from the series mostly because of the risks I took visually. The idea came from a nightmare I had, so it was a pretty vivid creating experience. Drawing it felt like I was standing on an uneven scaffold.

Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS

Contact the editor, Claire Howlett, on claire@imaginefx.com or write to ImagineFX, Future Publishing, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA, England

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Our recent feature in issue 154, asking if you're stuck in an art bubble, resonated with reader Adar.

Bubble burst!

Just writing to applaud the topic of art bubbles in the December issue. It's so tricky to maintain a balance between seeking influences that help one reach their goals, while remaining open to alternative positive influences as well. Kudos to ImagineFX in general for representing a broad spectrum of styles across commercial art. This is a persistent reminder to readers of the magazine – myself included – that our own style doesn't lie at the centre of the "art universe".

Adar Darnov, via email

Claire replies Thank you for emailing in, Adar. With all that seems to be going on in the world, I thought it might be relevant to think about how being in a bubble can reflect in all aspects of our lives. We do try to represent a broad spectrum or art styles and skills, and we hope that we introduce people to new artists, themes and techniques.

Give me credit

I've only been a digital artist since last Christmas, having been a traditional artist working with paint, water, paper, canvas and so on. I'd love to subscribe to your magazine, but there's no way that I'm going to give anyone access to my bank. Been there, done that, got the T-shirt. I will gladly submit a credit card, though. I won't even let PayPal have my bank details. Please advise.

John, via email

Turn to page 46 to see how you can give the perfect Christmas gift: a year's subscription to ImagineFX!

Claire replies Hello John, I'm happy to report that we do accept credit cards. I think you may have seen an offer that's quarterly, which is via Direct Debit (I think it's called a continuous credit card in the US). We'll have loads of subscription offers in the run-up to Christmas, so keep a close eye on our social media pages, or visit our dedicated subscriptions website at **www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk**.

Archive please!

For many years I've been a loyal reader of your fantastic, amazing magazine, and so I've accumulated a great number of issues. I don't want to chuck them out, so now I have a big problem. I often want to read an old article on a certain topic, but don't know where to start. I see the pile of magazines in front of me and I feel helpless.

Is it possible to create a content archive (or maybe there's one already?), on CD/DVD, with keywords for the topics, issue number, year and month? At least for the past 10-15 years! Did you already think about it? I suspect it'll involve quite a bit of effort. However, I believe many readers of ImagineFX have the same problem, so it would be well worth doing. Sorry for my rusty English!

Siegfried Kiuferkieva, Germany

Claire replies Ah, Siegfried. For starters, your English is miles ahead of my German! Yes, I would love to have a content archive, but it really would be impossible for us to be able to create one. I simply don't have the staffing to be able to create and maintain it. I know that this isn't the answer that you, or other readers would have wanted. Sorry!

DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE? Don't worry – you can still get hold of it. Visit http://ifxm.ag/155-ifx for details.

FRESH PAINT

New works that have grabbed our attention

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@druakim

Mark
@milamber23

Palostark
@palostark

Just finished something that you want us to shout about? Then tag us on Twitter or Instagram, or find us on Facebook!

Artist Q&A

STRUGGLING WITH A PAINTING TECHNIQUE OR TOPIC? EMAIL **HELP@IMAGINEFX.COM** TODAY!

The ImagineFX panel

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

David Brasgalla

Dave is a graphic designer and illustrator from Stockholm who works in both digital and traditional mediums. He's currently employed at games company RiotMinds.
www.pixelhuset.se

Chris Rathbone

Chris is a vector-based artist who specialises in sport and comic book illustration. He's worked with Sky Sports, NBC Sports, and many personalities within the motorsport industry.
www.chrisrathbone.com

Commissioned for London Film & Comic Con 2017

Artist Q&A
Need our advice?
Email **help@imaginefx.com** with your art questions and we'll provide all the answers!

Question

Can you tell me how to create custom brushes in Illustrator please?

José Marcum, US

Answer

Chris replies

I create all my work in Adobe Illustrator. I love the accuracy the Pen tool gives you, and the fact there are so many options available to use within the program, such as the Path Finder and Blend tools, that enable you to create clean, precise artwork.

I like my line work to have a more natural look, and as a result I would dip in and out of Photoshop so I could use my Wacom tablet to create pressure-sensitive line work. I would then bring the drawing into Illustrator and redraw it. This was obviously quite time consuming, and also because Illustrator is a vector program, I felt my line work became too 'perfect' and I lost the natural feeling to my drawing.

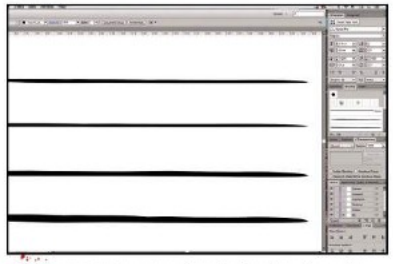
So I started creating my own brushes. I created lots of varying brush strokes and turned them into brushes. This now meant that I had the precise control of drawing with the Pen tool, but I could also give my line work a more natural, hand-drawn appearance.

Artist's secret

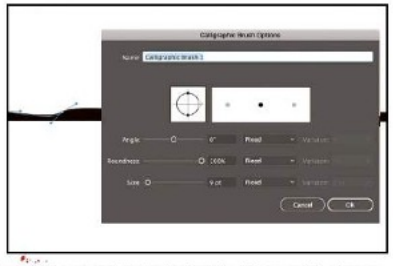
Diff'rent strokes for diff'rent folks

Take the time to build up your own library of brush strokes and effects that you can then use in your illustration work. This will then help you to develop your own unique and recognisable style to your work.

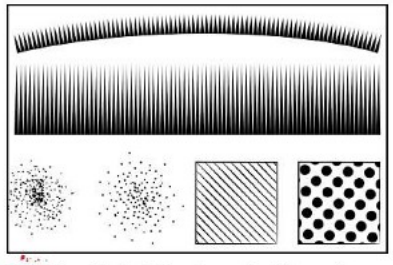
Step-by-step: Develop interesting line work with custom vector brushes



1 Create your custom brushes by drawing your own weighted lines. Either with a drawing tablet in Photoshop, in Illustrator using the Blog brush tool, or simple pen and paper! Then, bring your line work into Illustrator and create outlines from them.



2 Once you have your brush stokes outlined, you can use the Anchor Point tools to go in and refine any part of the line to get it just how you want it. Then, create a new Calligraphic brush by clicking the Create new brush icon in your Brushes panel.



3 Follow this technique to create a library of different brushes and effects to suit your style. You can use it to create Pen brush strokes, but also to shading effects such as stippling or half-tone effects. You can also create 'fills' as well as 'strokes'.

Question
My paintings seem to lack focus and feel flat – what can I do?
Xin Qian Ko, Canada

Answer
Dave replies

Sometimes we have a great idea, a solid composition, and nice line work and rendering – yet the image still ends up feeling bland and unfocused. The quickest solution is to utilise dramatic lighting effects. These don't have to be complicated or clever: simple, yet thoughtful lighting setups can make your whole image come alive. They're also a great way to direct the viewer's gaze.

I've been told by more than one art director that they're always on the lookout for great lighting and great composition, so working on these are a sure way to increase the attention you get! Begin by making many lighting variations of a single scene, and observe closely how each solution affects the impact and focus of your image. You can do this at the thumbnail stage, but working digitally means that it's also easy to work on this with a finished line drawing or sketch – so let's try it!

The finished lighting setup helps put the main focus on our foreground character, with a secondary focus point on the warrior in the distance.

Here's my inked line drawing. The composition works and we understand the scene easily enough, but it reads a little "flat". The focus is uncertain.

Artist's secret
Double the value!

I often end up creating narrower, weaker value ranges than I intend, so I often find it helpful to take my final colour layer, duplicate it, and set that layer to Multiply or Overlay to quickly widen the value range.

Step-by-step: Explore different lighting solutions for a single image

1 This lighting setup puts the viewer in the foreground. The smaller warrior and far hillside are shaded to become more of a silhouette. There's still enough information in the shapes to read what's going on over there, but the foreground details are the ones that matter here.

2 This version flips the first setup, and now we are looking out from the shadows towards the distant warrior, who is now fully lit. Keeping the foreground value range narrow will let the overall shape tell that part of the story, and moves the focus over to the small warrior.

3 Finally, we have a combination of the first two. The foreground figure is in shadow lower down, but moves up into light, creating a dramatic effect. I still get depth between foreground and distant ground, and could even use the same effect on the far figure if I wanted to.

I created my own perspective grid for this piece, and then exaggerated it slightly to make it feel even more dynamic.

Question
I want to ramp up the perspective in my scene. Do you have any tips?
Marie Huber, Germany

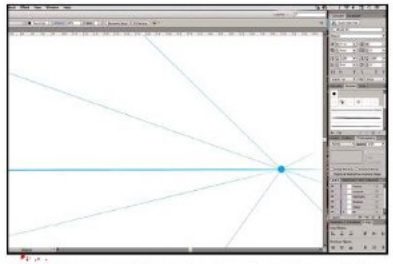
Answer
Chris replies

There are perspective tools built into both Photoshop and Illustrator (for example, click Edit>Perspective Warp in Photoshop). When you're first experimenting with perspective I'd strongly suggest using these tools as a guide to help you with your compositions. Once you feel more confident and understand which is the right perspective for your composition, then you can start to create your own perspective grid for more flexibility.

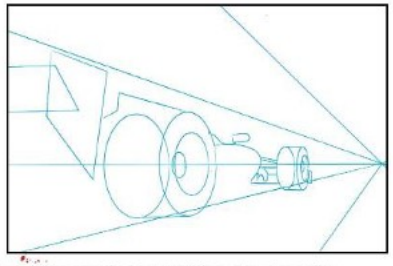
Having a strong perspective in your work helps the image feel more realistic, and it also enables you to convey the power you want the image to have. For example, picking a low-angle perspective, like in my racing car piece here, gives a real sense of speed and power, whereas picking a higher perspective angle (imagine looking down from a tall building) can give a sense of height and fear.

Once you've decided on a perspective and angle for your composition, you can start to bend the rules slightly and exaggerate your perspective for a more dramatic effect. However, don't go too far because it will begin to feel unrealistic!

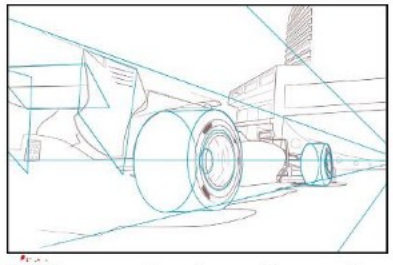
Step-by-step: Build up dynamic movement in a composition



1 It all starts with your horizon line. Once you have this you can then pick your primary vanishing point and begin to create your guides from the point. Keep your angles simple to make your life easier – you can always rotate your artwork later!



2 Once you're happy with your perspective, sketch some loose shapes to see where and how you want your objects to sit. I often have multiple sketches with different angles and perspectives before I decide on the one I feel works best.



3 When your angles and perspective are working well together, start to add detail and flesh your drawing out. You can also add a secondary vanishing point if necessary. For my piece here I added a secondary vanishing point for the buildings.

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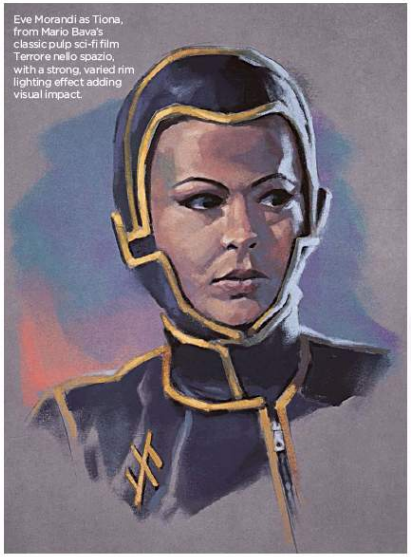
Question
I want to try my hand at rim lighting – any advice?

Luz van Eekelen, US

Answer
Dave replies

Rim lighting or backlighting will add dimension and interest to your figures. I've loved using this kind of effect since childhood, where I first noticed it being employed for lighting the actors on the original Star Trek TV show. Even so, it took time for me to understand why it was so effective. If used incorrectly, it can flatten out your image rather than adding depth to it.

A simple outline can easily create a "cut out" feeling. This can certainly have its own place, but isn't really the effect we're after. To make your rim light effects truly enhancing, try bending and wrapping the back light more around the object or figure. This will help reveal, define and accent the dimensional form, while also creating new opportunities for you to direct the viewer's eye around the image. Keeping the overall shape of the rim light varied and interesting is another way to engage the viewer.



Eve Morandi as Tiona, from Mario Bava's classic pulp sci-fi film Terrore nello spazio, with a strong, varied rim lighting effect adding visual impact.

Observe the contrast in these two shapes. The outline faintly suggests the form, but the "wrapped" rim light shape actually begins to reveal it!

Artist's secret
Go beyond your reference source

Reference photography can trap us if we become too tied to it. Don't be afraid to expand and exaggerate lighting effects in service of your image – push outwards based on the information you have!

Step-by-step: Add dimension to your rim light effects

1 Here my portrait of Tiona is only utilising one main light source. It's a perfectly serviceable image, but a second, strong light source from behind and above will add impact to the image, and also help pull the character out from the background.

2 This is what I would have done when I was beginning in illustration – it's more of an even outline of the form. It's okay, but it's something we need to push and exaggerate to make the image really pop. You can see how this subtly flattens out the figure.

3 I wrap the light around the form of Tiona's head and uniform, making sure to vary the shapes and widths in the light pattern. She'll separate better from the background, and the cool rim light will help to define the dimensional structure, whilst contrasting the warm main light.

Artist Portfolio

JASON RAINVILLE

The Canadian fantasy and sci-fi illustrator tells **Gary Evans** why it's crucial to build up a pattern when tackling a project

Jason Rainville is thinking about how to describe his art. The fantasy and sci-fi illustrator begins with the render: he likes to emphasise form – a soft image is an unsuccessful one – so he lands on the word "chunky." Pose and lighting help dramatise his work. It could be a drama that's quiet and understated or a drama that's loud and bombastic, but his work must be dramatic. In short, Jason makes tough-looking art that also tells a story.

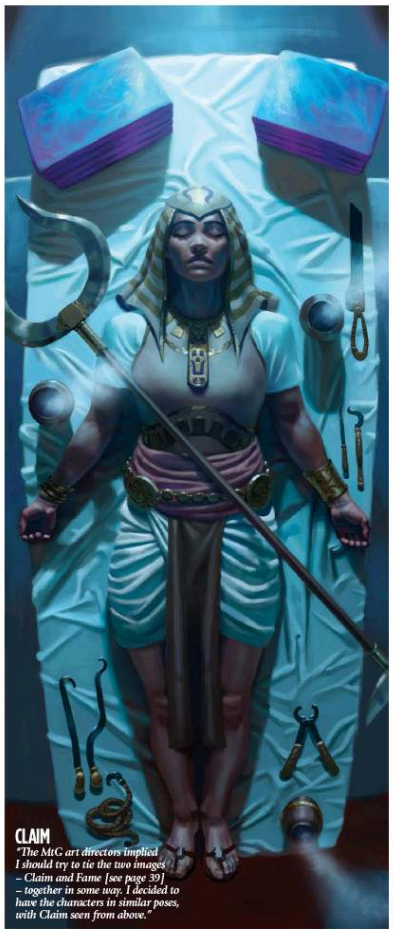
Behind the scenes, Jason follows a strict regime. Day by day, he builds discipline, builds up a pattern, improves slowly but surely. This regime applies to both his art and to his everyday life.

"I love character moments and emotion," the Canadian says. "Nothing holds a viewer's eye like something they can relate to, something that strikes deeper than the 'cool factor'" of the visuals or the design. There are two stages to an artist's early development: before and after intentional study."

Jason didn't begin intentional study until he was 22. Before that, he doodled. Growing up in small-town northern Ontario – in the "lower-middle class" – he had no idea how ➤➤

Artist PROFILE

Jason Rainville
LOCATION: Canada
FAVOURITE ARTISTS: Alphonse Mucha (for the Slav Epic more than anything), John Singer Sargent, Norman Rockwell, JC Leyendecker, William-Adolphe Bouguereau
SOFTWARE USED: Photoshop
WEB: www.jasonrainville.com



CLAIM
"The MtG art directors implied I should try to tie the two images – Claim and Fame [see page 39] – together in some way. I decided to have the characters in similar poses, with Claim seen from above."

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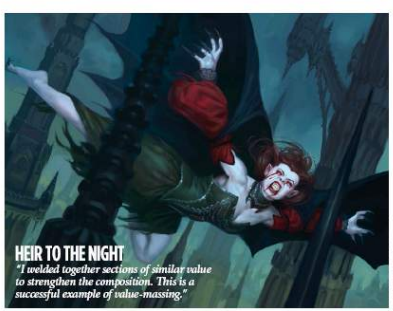

HEIR TO THE NIGHT
"I welded together sections of similar value to strengthen the composition. This is a successful example of value-massing."

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"Nothing holds a viewer's eye like something they can relate to"

HELLKNIGHT COVER
"It's always difficult to illustrate two characters fighting on a cover. The client always wants both faces shown, so you have to get creative with posing."

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ORACLE OF DUST
"One of my most successful Magic: The Gathering illustrations. I fell in love with the brief, which called for a very quiet alien scene."

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» to make art a career. It wasn't until the second year of college that he had access to the internet. That's when he discovered conceptart.org.

"It was a place where amateurs and professionals got together to objectively critique each other's art," he says. "I learned how actively studying from observation and a lot of hard work can lead to real progress. After that I was hooked."

TWO SIDES OF THE SAME CARD

Jason studied graphic design, but would always find himself including illustrative elements in his work. Still, he had doubts about making it as professional illustrator. After college, in 2008, work as a graphic designer was equally hard to come by. He moved home and looked for a job as a printer, and finally any job at all. "I couldn't find work digging ditches," he says.

The artist continued to study art and eventually got some "very low-level work" with Rite Publishing, a company that created content for Pathfinder, the role-playing game. More jobs followed. He landed projects with Paizo Publishing and later with Wizards of the Coast. Jason owes a lot to his mentor at Rite, Steve Russell, and to his family. The former supported him artistically, the latter financially.

"I'll never forget Steve and the effect he's had on my life. So far I've worked every member of my close family into an illustration for various clients, with the final family member's illustration being released later this year. It's my small way of paying them back for years of support."

When Jason works with a new art director, he ask how they want to do things. Some like a lot of input, while others let him do his own thing. There are those who prefer to see concepts »

FAME
"Fame was an example of being honest with yourself and your art. Part-way through I realised the original background was boring and flat, and changed it to include more interesting elements at varying depths."

CHARACTERS OPENER
"One of my favourite illustrations. I feel like everything – values, colours, facial expression – is working well. I added a fun compositional element where the character is already trapped behind the net.

© Paizo Publishing

"So far I've worked every member of my close family into an illustration for various clients"

BRUTAL, BOMBASTIC, AND HORRIFYING

Jason tells us how this brief from an adult RPG became a baroque bloodbath

This was the last image I produced for the Lamentations of the Flame Princess – a brutal, bombastic and horrifying role-playing game set around the time of the English Civil War. The brief was simple and visceral. The violent, blood-splattered musketeer Alice would single-handedly take on an entire Spanish terico, with the soldiers in her path enduring a number of horrible wounds.

1 THUMBNAILING

I pulled some reference of Spanish tericos and their soldiers, and began thumbnailing. I always thumbnail in pencil first, and usually I try to be clean about it, but this was a special case. The scene is so chaotic, with so many moving parts, that a looser impression of the values was my early focus.

2 SKETCHES

I sketched some basic values in Photoshop and settled on a central composition. I cleaned it up, added some colour and sketched some key characters. In a rare move , I sent the client a "sketch sheet", which clarified what would go where.

3 REFERENCE

I live in a remote area where models are hard to come by, so I tend to shoot myself for reference 99 per cent of the time. So I had to fill in for many characters in the same scene! I brought all of the pictures into Photoshop and arranged them together into a ridiculous ref sheet. Or maybe it's cool – you decide.

4 TIGHT SKETCH

Using all of my shots and gathered references, I set about creating a tight sketch of all the characters. I find working out all of the poses and details beforehand really helps with workflow. Noodling with basic aspects of an image down the line slows me quite a bit. Underneath this sketch I put in some rough colours. I very much wanted this to look like a baroque painting of the time, with a dark background and very dramatic lighting.

5 FINAL IMAGE

From there it was just a case of rendering everything overtop my rough colours and sketch. I tend to use simple brushes and techniques, and minimal layers if I can afford to.

KARI ZEV'S EXPERTISE
"I'd made some studies of clouds before working on this card, and it really helped. Study a subject and apply it to a similar subject you're working on."

© Wizards of the Coast

for every individual element, while others ask for a sketch of the full image. He likes to go back and forth on illustrative elements such as mood, themes, the back stories of his characters, and visual and narrative depth. "These are very satisfying exercises," Jason says, "that I feel are both gratifying and necessary in the more complex or one-off jobs, like a book cover, which needs to do so much with a single image."

> **When I'm asked to change something I'm very amenable… I simply want my best work to be out there**

A recent Magic: the Gathering project called for two illustrations, Claim and Fame, featured on the same card, to be in some way connected. Jason did this through clever composition. Claim shows a woman dead on a slab and Fame shows the same woman as warrior reincarnated, her pose nearly identical in each.

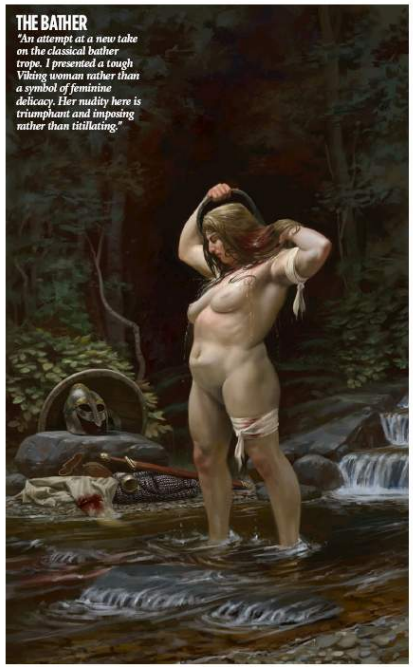
WHAT DOES AND DOESN'T SELL

Jason begins with thumbnails, very small in size, to work out overall values without getting "too carried away." If something isn't working, he can usually see it and fix it. But he's equally happy for art directors to chip in with their observations.

"When I'm asked to change something," he says, "I'm very amenable. Not only because I want to keep the job and have a good working relationship with the client, but because I also simply want my best work to be out there."

Jason began working for Magic: the Gathering in 2013, which he calls "a blessing." The trading card game has a huge fanbase full of avid collectors. The game's online store makes it easy for fans to find Jason's work, which acted as a "catalyst in my business and marketing education."

These two factors – business and marketing – are what Jason finds most difficult about life as a professional artist. "Thinking about what may or may not sell causes me a bit of anxiety," he says. "Typically, what has a wide general appeal doesn't interest me, and what does interest me might not have a lot of general appeal.



THE BATHER
"An attempt at a new take on the classical bather trope. I presented a tough Viking woman rather than a symbol of feminine delicacy. Her nudity here is triumphant and imposing rather than titillating."

© Wizards of the Coast

THUNDERBREAK REGENT
"A fun Magic: The Gathering illustration. My studies of snow, ice and large icicle formations really paid off."

REALITY SMASHER
"Another fun illustration to work on. It took ages but it was time well-spent, getting the iridescent elements of the giant creatures carapace just right."

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LEARNING TO FIND YOUR FORM

Jason explains how you can grasp the most important aspect of visual art...

"When I first started studying, I often felt frustration at how slowly things were moving. Then, about six months in, that changed. I learned two things: how to measure accurately with my eyes, and form.

I was annoyed that my studies from observation looked little like their subjects, so I started training myself to line up features and elements, measuring things with my eye, comparing the size, angle and shapes of those elements to others in the subject. With practice, I was able to more accurately capture my subject. I'd sketched Krillin from Dragon Ball Z and noticed that his forearm looked more like a real forearm! That was when I first realised that I had progressed.

Form was something I learned from Andrew Loomis, especially his book Drawing the Head & Hands. I focused on constructing planes that recede and advance through space, which made it so much easier to determine lighting, place features, foreshortening – everything. Krillin and the other drawing here are from between 2006 and 2008. Compare them to, say, The Bather [page 42], and you see that the most important aspect of visual art is an understanding of form.""

KRILLIN
Two of Jason's biggest breakthroughs were learning form and how to accurately measure with his eyes, the development of which can be seen in this early sketch.

ANDREW LOOMIS
From Andrew's book, Drawing the Head & Hands, Jason learned key composition skills such as lighting, place features, and foreshortening.

> "It's more important to build discipline than inspiration"

"Trying to fit a personal project of any kind in between work becomes even more difficult when you feel you have to justify every aspect of it. That's the "dark" side to business considerations, when you feel like your interests won't sell well."

BUILD UP A PATTERN

Jason has been working on one illustration for over three years. It features more than 100 characters in a "complex narrative scene." Commercial work always comes first. So he found it hard to spend an extended period of time on this personal piece. Instead, he added to it when not tackling paid jobs. He's finally at the rendering stage.

Jason recently started another project that feeds into his work in an interesting way: bodybuilding. Improving his art, like improving his body, is done bit by bit through dedication and repetition: "This past February, I was in a bad place. I wasn't the person I wanted to be, so I enacted a self-improvement programme that spanned various parts of my life. One such part was my physical fitness.

"I'm not rippling with muscles and as a shorter guy I lift less weight in general, but I've noticed progress, which is the point. I'm competing with only my past self. It's an easy regimen to follow and builds up a pattern. It's more important to build discipline than inspiration. I feel the same way about art: build up a pattern and don't just rely on inspiration."

ODIN IN THE HOUSE OF GIANTS
"A personal piece displaying my love of Norse mythology. I wanted to present something very dramatic and classical."

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Sketchbook

Lorena Lammer

Classic fantasy themes are mixed with a dark undercurrent to produce a beguiling range of sketches and visual explorations

Artist PROFILE

Lorena Lammer
LOCATION: Germany

Lorena is a freelance illustrator and concept artist based in Germany. She works mostly digitally, but loves sketching traditionally – especially with ink. When she isn't painting or drawing she spends her time with friends, reading, playing video games and entertaining her two crazy cats.
www.lululana.com

CANDLES
"I love illustrating things that are surreal and magical, even if it's just in a test drawing like this one."

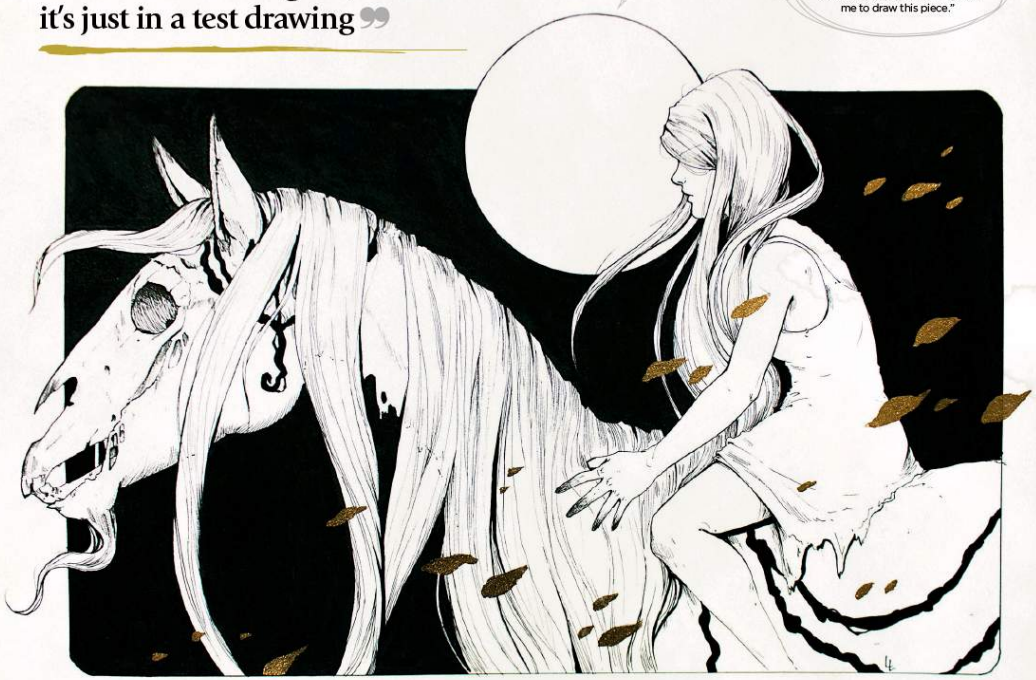
FEED THE RAIN
"I came up with this drawing while listening to the song Carnival Of Rust, by Poets Of The Fall."

I'LL BE WAITING
"I often experience sleep paralysis episodes, being watched by an unknown presence while asleep."

HERO'S SORROW
"Peter S Beagle wrote that great heroes need great sorrows and burdens, or half their greatness goes unnoticed."

> I love illustrating things that are surreal and magical, even if it's just in a test drawing

COLD WIND
"I was always fascinated by the tales about the Kelpie, which inspired me to draw this piece."



> Not everything is as beautiful on the inside as it is on the outside

CARRION
"This piece is about how not everything is as beautiful on the inside as it is on the outside."

STRANGE TREES
"I love drawing trees and faeries, so here I combined both elements. Basically it's trees coming to life in the form of nymphs."

SOONER OR LATER
"Of course this one is inspired by Alice In Wonderland, but this bottle isn't actually labelled 'Poison'..."

SCARED
"This drawing also deals with sleep paralysis. It's one of the most terrifying feelings even though it's not real."

REAL MAGIC
"To make real magic happen you can't simply offer anything – you have to give away pieces of yourself to make it work."

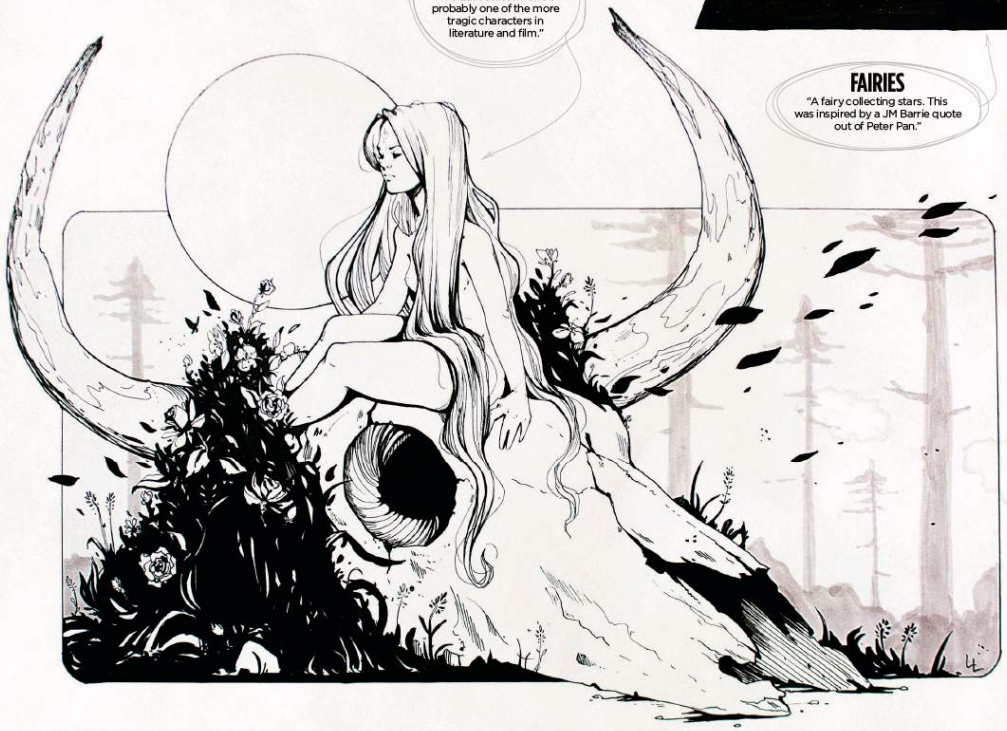
> "To make real magic happen you have to give away pieces of yourself to make it work"

Sketchbook Lorena Lammer

SOULS
"Here I wanted to show a silent world, with just one living being left among the souls of the dead."

I REGRET
"I always felt so sad for The Last Unicorn. She's probably one of the more tragic characters in literature and film."

FAIRIES
"A fairy collecting stars. This was inspired by a JM Barrie quote out of Peter Pan."



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Discover how to paint distinctive characters. Case in point: Ramón Nuñez's arch-looking figure on the cover. Plus, sketch artists share their secrets, Greg Ruth on why he loves/hates the ballpoint pen, and clay sculpting advice.

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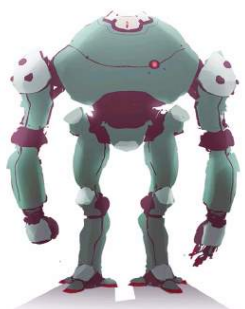
THE LIFE OF A CONCEPT ARTIST

Concept artist **Gennaro Grazioso's** career in the games industry has been aided by Autodesk SketchBook's tools



Gennaro Grazioso lives the kind of life many dream of. Having graduated from Teesside University in 2012, the likable artist is now greatly in demand as a freelance games artist, working with everyone from cool indies to triple-A studios. But the secret of his success is quite a simple one.

"It was basically constant grafting," he says. "I was constantly at home, drawing, posting online, on forums like Polycount and communities like ArtStation, to expose my art to other people and hoping someone would see my potential. Eventually, I got an email offering me an interview for a job, and it snowballed from there."

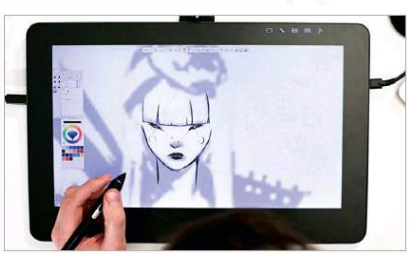
That job was as senior character and concept artist for Improbable, the London company behind the gaming platform SpatialOS, which recently achieved a $1billion valuation. During his 18 months at Improbable, he took full advantage to develop his skills, working on 3D characters, environments, weapons, prop modelling, animation, level design and prototyping. He also spent time art directing and concepting new IP, characters, robots, environments and props for projects.

Then in late 2014, Gennaro took the plunge into full-time freelance, and ➤➤

Artist PROFILE

Gennaro Grazioso

LOCATION: England
FAVOURITE ARTISTS: Calum Alexander Watt, Yoji Shinkawa, Karl Kopinski
SOFTWARE USED: SketchBook Pro
WEB: www.grazeart.com



CLEAN SWEEP
SketchBook's stripped-back interface gives you plenty of screen space to draw on.

ROBOT WARM-UPS
"Here's a set of robot designs I created for a free Gumroad tutorial (http://ifsm.ag/gen-g)."

GEIKO 03
Gennaro came across an online competition to create a geisha or samurai character and from that, his idea for his geiko series was born.

"I was constantly at home, drawing, posting online at Polycount and ArtStation…"

FIVE WAYS TO GENERATE IDEAS

Gennaro Grazioso presents his tips for coming up with new concepts...

"The way I generate ideas really depends on how I'm feeling at that moment in time. Some techniques will work one day, and some don't. When you're trying to do something creative, there's no one way. You should have a multitude of approaches to accomplish something: here are five for starters."

1 Rather than going straight into drawing sketches, I often start by writing about the character. I try to get in their head. What they would do, day to day? Do they have friends or family?

2 I always ask myself: what do I want the audience to feel when they see this character? So sometimes I write scripts of what the character would say to other people. I also like to make little mind maps.

3 I don't always start with words; something I'll just jump into a sketchbook and start sketching thumbnails instead, to get my brain warmed up. At this point, I'm not really committing to showing anything to the client. It's all for me.

4 It doesn't matter what it looks like: I'm not bothered about making a pretty drawing at this point. I'm really just making sure that I can see potential in this idea.

5 The result of all this might be a couple of words, or a very rough and loose doodle. And then from there I'll jump into SketchBook, and actually start thumbnailing different designs.

GEIKO 02
"A lone wolf lurking in the shadows, waiting for vulnerable men to wander through..."

> "I like how clean SketchBook is, and how it really is just about the drawing. It's a nice experience"

hasn't looked back since. But he's so determined not to rest on his laurels that he devotes two hours every morning to advancing his artistic skills.

"I have a deep obsession with studying anatomy and expanding my drawing techniques," he says. To make sure that happens, he gets up around 5-5.30am, goes out for a run, and then studies from 6 to 8am. "After that, I'll go and walk the dog, do the things I need to do, then start my day's work about 9 or 10am, finishing around six in the evening."

FORWARD THINKING

But even that's not the whole story. "Before I go to bed, I'll plan out the next day," he adds. "I've got a little whiteboard and I spend an hour writing out what I'm going to do."

It's the kind of discipline other artists will envy, and it's born of a passion for what he does. "I always knew that I wanted to do art as a career," Gennaro says. "Growing up, I was always doodling, drawing all of the Pokémon that you could possibly draw. So wasn't really an option. It was what I was going to do."

His style is strongly influenced by comic books: "I really like the kind of heavy ink work versus the more photoreal work that's used predominantly in the gaming industry right now," he explains. But more broadly, his inspirations are often drawn from all art forms, including architecture, fashion, and films. "And I think it's important to stay true to what I like, versus being too concerned with what else is out there."

Most of his work is done in Autodesk's SketchBook, which is not the most feature-rich of drawing tools – but Gennaro sees that as a positive thing. "It doesn't try to focus on doing too many things; it just gives you a really nice experience," he says. "Painting and drawing software is so often filled with clutter. I like how clean SketchBook is, and how it really is just about the drawing."

He does, however, say that the program's Symmetry (Mirror) function is well worth a look. "It enables you to draw on one side and it will update on the other," he explains. "I use this all the time when I'm designing characters, because it just speeds up the process so much – especially when producing more orthographic drawings."

TOOLS OF THE CONCEPT ART TRADE

Gennaro will usually then use Photoshop to add finishing touches, while 3DS Max, ZBrush and Keyshot come into play for 3D work. But in general, this artist takes quite an old-school approach to technology. So for instance, when an idea pops into his head, he heads not for a digital tablet but his trusty paper sketchbook.

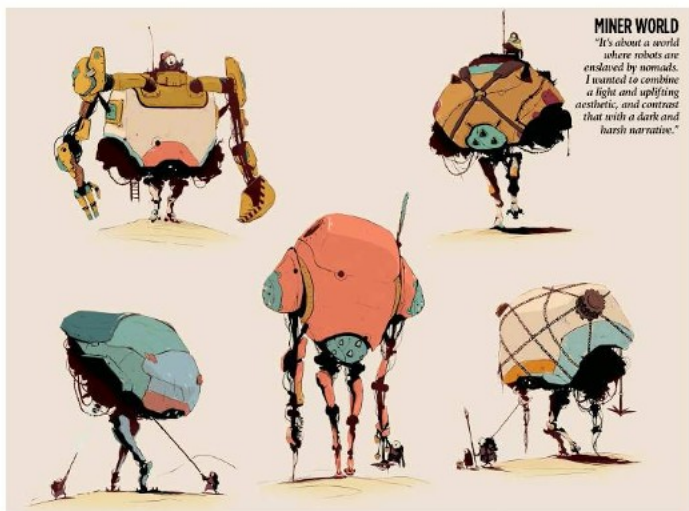
"I carry it everywhere with a couple of pens," he says. "I like the fact that with a physical pad, there's no Ctrl-Z. I find that quite liberating. It enables me to not care about how it looks and just more about getting it down as much as possible."

A work ethic, a determination to succeed, and a no-nonsense approach to tools: new artists could do worse than follow Gennaro's example.

SKETCHBOOK PRO'S TOOLS IN ACTION
Gennaro loves how Autodesk's symmetry tools helps him quickly produce orthographic drawings – crucial when producing concept art for commercial projects.

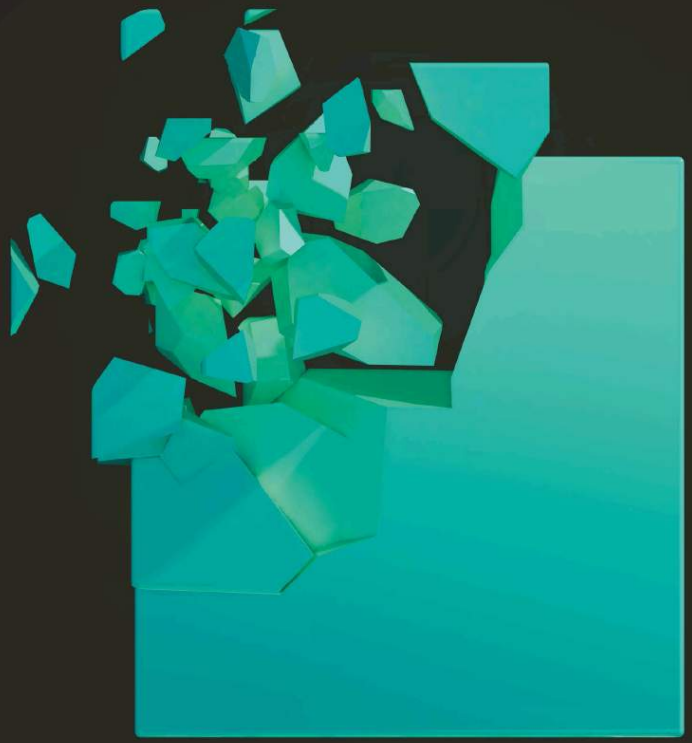
YAKUZA BOSS
"Here are some of the ideas I had for possible Yakuza leaders."

DISHONORED UNDERGROUND BOXERS
"Even though the father left the fight empty handed, he smiles at his son to reassure him everything will be okay."



MINER WORLD
"It's about a world where robots are enslaved by nomads. I wanted to combine a light and uplifting aesthetic, and contrast that with a dark and harsh narrative."

THE EVENT FOR THE CG COMMUNITY



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Advice from the world's best artists

This issue:

62 New ways with colour and light
Maria Poliakova paints a gentle portrait of a girl using a variety of vibrant colours.

70 Paint a classic fairy tale scene
Chrissie Zullo uses Procreate to create an iconic moment from a much-loved fairy tale.

76 Core Skills: ZBrushCore
See how Pablo Muñoz Gómez is able to add visual interest to any model.

78 15 techniques for painting dragons
Alex Stone shares his ideas on designing realistic-looking dragons with personality.

84 Mastering the Mixer Brush tool
How to develop a traditional look on the digital canvas, with Wangjie Li.

Photoshop

NEW WAYS WITH COLOUR & LIGHT

Given a brief to create a bright and charming illustration for this month's cover, **Maria Poliakova** paints a portrait of a young girl in vibrant colours

Artist PROFILE

Maria Poliakova
LOCATION: Ukraine

Maria has spent the past five years working in the game industry for a range of companies, mostly as a freelance illustrator. In her spare time she likes to create female portraits and experiment with colour.
http://ifxm.ag/maria-p

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!

I really like working in colour, whether it's in Photoshop or painting traditionally with watercolours. Vibrant colour will often make an illustration more decorative, but there's also a danger of it becoming flat. However, you can counteract this by adding a sense of volume in the right places throughout the composition.

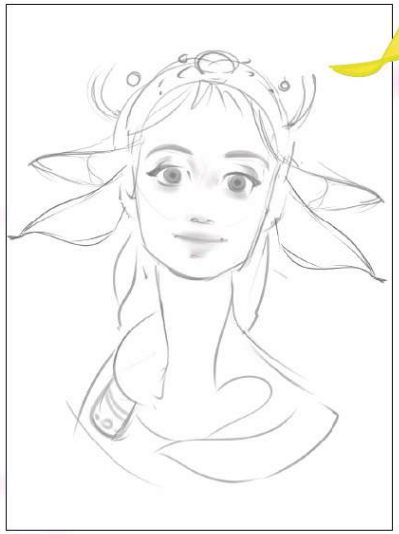
When creating personal work, I'll often start with colour blotted above a rough sketch. Then I'll sculpt form with colour and strokes, and overlap layers of different colours on top of each other. It's easy to experiment when you're working digitally!

For inspiration I often study classic artists. You can learn a lot from them, such as how to guide the viewer's eye with help of the light, shadows and colour.

I particularly like the art of Klimt, Mucha and Van Gogh. Klimt was able to capture a strong sense of character and nature with brush strokes and colours. I adore Mucha's line art. He depicted feminine beauty perfectly, and had an eye for decorative details, brilliant composition and gorgeous colours. And Van Gogh was just a genius.

1 Design illustration phase

The first thing I do before starting an illustration is to browse through my folder of inspiration. Inside are plenty of sub-folders, containing images of lighting, faces, human figures, clothing, illustrations from favourite artists, animals, caterpillars, flowers and plenty more besides. I quickly look through some folders, keeping in mind my theme or work brief. I notice what makes a particular image look good, what emotion it brings out in me, or what's actually beautiful in it. My own idea comes from studying these images. When working with colour the most inspiring thing is nature: flowers, butterflies, caterpillars, especially tropical species.



2 Produce a rough sketch

Next, I need to visualise my idea, so I produce a series of small sketches, which are made up of flowing lines. This acts as both a warm-up exercise and a way of focusing on the task in hand. After I've finished drawing, I narrow down the options and continue to refine them, until the best one is ready to be used as a base.

PRO SECRETS

Buy third-party brushes

I use the Speedpaint option within Jonas de Ro's Custom Brush panel. It has a good range of brushes and they're well organised. You can buy this Photoshop plug-in from www.jonasdero.com.

PRO SECRETS

Final tweaks

During the final stages of an illustration I'll use the Levels tool to adjust my colours. I especially like the Selective Color option, which enables you to modify your colours separately. I'll also apply a little noise to my finished art (Filter>Noise>Add Noise). The noise level ranges from four to seven pixels, depending on the size of the image.

3 Refining details of the line art

I create a new layer, then reduce the Opacity of the sketch layer and select an opaque brush. Then on a new layer I create the line art. I try to do it as cleanly as possible, so that there are no unnecessary lines, and every stroke and dot serves a purpose. I lay down flowing, soft lines for this portrait of a pretty young woman, because they help to create the correct mood in the piece.

4 Developing the colour palette

As I said earlier, nature is a great source of inspiration, especially for developing colour combinations. Look how bold the colours are on insect and fishes, for example. So follow nature's lead: pick a vibrant colour, select a big Soft brush and start to draw. I select colours that I know work together well, and bear in mind that every colour has its tone. It's best not to rush this stage.

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: ONE EDGE

This brush comes in handy for illustrating volume and shadows.

OIL 2

This brush creates a pleasing sense of texture with light pressure.

SOFT ROUND

The standard Soft brush, works well as a base for blending colours.

BIG SOFTIE

This brush combines features of soft and textures brushes.

5 Colouring the line art

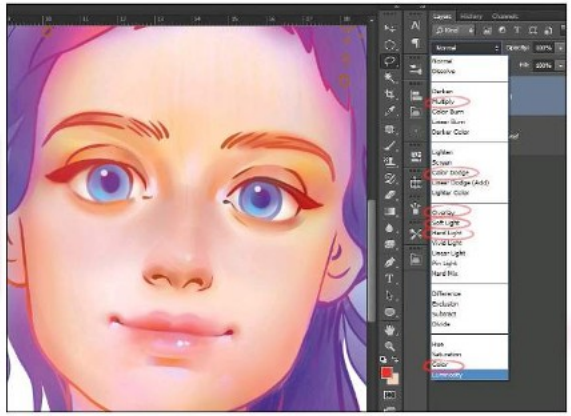
If you want to retain some of your line art in your final image, then it can be done in an interesting fashion. I lock transparent layer pixels on the line art layer, select the big Soft brush and paint in my colours. The results vary: sometimes they're the same tone, sometimes they're darker and sometimes they're lighter and brighter. Whatever the outcome, it'll add interest to your artwork.

6 Developing the facial details

My favourite part of illustration is painting the face. Because I've chosen to keep the line art on show in the finished piece, I sense this illustration will become more decorative and graphic. I'm trying to add volumetric shading only in a few spots and most of the time I work with a big Soft brush. I also use a textured brush for doing the highlights. At the same time, I'm trying to shape a nose, lips and eyes. It's always exciting to paint!

7 Colouring the face

I refine the colours of the face using the principles of warm colour theory. In this image I paint with bright and vibrant colours: the shadows are orange and the light is colder. But sometimes it's hard to do all at once. One solution is to first paint the face with a neutral skin colour using shading techniques, rather than simply filling in the face with a single tone. Then create a new layer, set it to either Hard Light or Soft Light, and then add orange in the shadows and a light purple to the brighter areas.

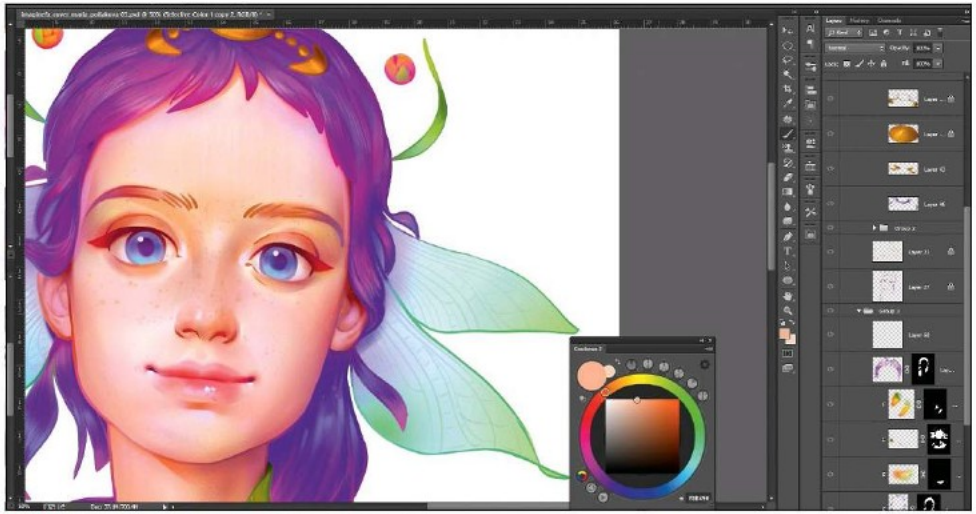


8 Using blending modes

I often use a range of blending modes: Soft Light, Hard Light, Overlay, Multiply and Color. All of them (except Multiply) help me to create bright, saturated colours. Try creating a new layer and setting the blending mode to Soft Light. Then pick a big Soft brush, choose a light colour and experiment here and there on your canvas.

9 Depicting shadows in an illustration

I always like to experiment with colour. It's easier to do this in light areas on the canvas, but don't forget the shadows – try to paint with bright and saturated colours. There's no need to do this with all your shadows; it can just be in a small part of your illustration. Here, I've selected a bright red. This will add variety to my overall colour palette, and ensures my shadows won't look dull and boring. ➤➤



10 Painting the character's hair and wings

I leave the face as it is and turn my attention to the hair. I paint it in purple with bluish highlights, then decide to add pink in the shadow. I like this effect because it enables me to get rid of the strong dark shadow on the bottom, which otherwise might prove distracting for the viewer.

11 Take the time to set up an efficient workspace

I keep three windows open during my painting process. I paint in the main window; there's also a smaller version of my WIP so I can see how the image is developing and spot any mistakes; and a black and white version that enables me to check my values. To set up your workspace, go to Window>Arrange>New window for…(name of your file), once for small version and second time for black and white. To set up the black and white window go to View>Proof Setup>Custom>Device to Simulate>sGrey. Then press Ctrl+Y when the black and white window is active.

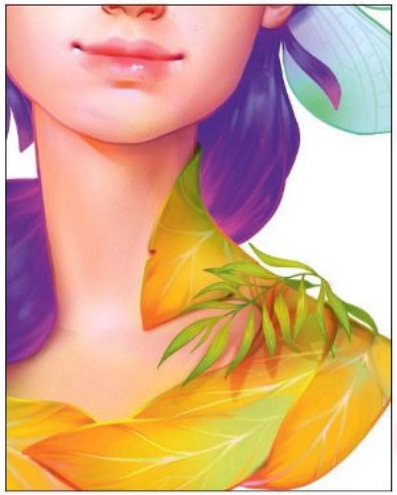
PRO SECRETS

Make use of shortcuts

I strongly recommend learning all of Photoshop's basic keyboard shortcuts. This will free up time – useful when you're painting to a deadline. Once I became confident in using Photoshop I changed some of the default shortcuts to better suit my painting process. You can do this by pressing Ctrl+Alt+Shift+K.

12 How to draw a face

As an artist, it's vital to know how to draw a face. You need to know the anatomy and be able to imagine it as a simplified geometrical form. I often sculpt face in clay, which is a great way to break down a face into basic structures such as a sphere (an eye) or two cylinders (the lips). And every shape has its own shadow, light and highlight.



13 Construct an outfit from leaves

Because this is a stylised illustration, I don't need to draw the leaves of the figure's clothing realistically. This is why I create soft transitions of colour using light, subtle strokes. In just a few places I add contrasting shadows, which helps to boost volume. Placing a branch on one shoulder helps to add visual interest to the right-hand side.

14 Making final tweaks

I review areas that need polishing, and adjust colours using the Levels tool. The Selective Color tool enables me to adjust individual colours during this review stage. Finally, I add a layer of noise to my image, sit back and call it done.

Next month in...
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX

Game art

We're jam-packed with astonishing art. Readers, you won't want to miss this one!

Next month

THE ART OF ASSASSIN'S CREED
We interview legendary art director **Raphael Lacoste** about the trials and triumphs of being at the helm of this stunning games franchise.

All this, and more!

Game art workshops
From characters to environments to weapons… we've got it all covered!

Interview with Jesse van Dijk
The endlessly vast and beautiful art from this Destiny concept artist.

Working for indie games
We speak to artists making a living at independent games studios.

Create unique concept art
The creators of The Long Dark share their secrets to stand out art.

ISSUE 157 ON SALE IN THE UK *29 December 2017*

Procreate

PAINT A CLASSIC FAIRY TALE SCENE

Chrissie Zullo uses Procreate, the affordable and much-loved painting app for the iPad Pro, to create an iconic moment from a fairy tale

Artist PROFILE

Chrissie Zullo

LOCATION: US

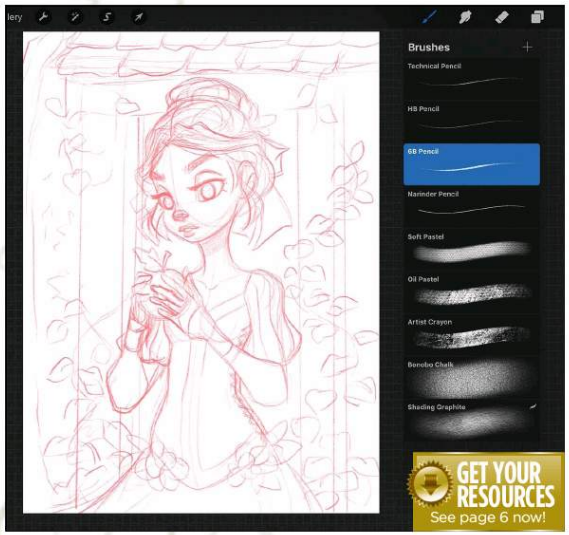
Chrissie is a Connecticut-based illustrator who has created artwork for comic books, posters and toy designs. She has a curious collection of all things yeti-like.
http://ifxm.ag/c-zullo

Procreate has quickly become my go-to digital painting app. Thanks to the portability of the iPad Pro, its appeal to me was to be able to create high-resolution digital paintings from anywhere, with the same quality you would find in a desktop program.

Procreate's clean and simple interface makes it welcoming to new and novice artists alike, and once paired with the Apple Pencil, I found it to feel the most natural way to draw digitally. Don't be fooled by appearances, though: this application offers all the tools you'll need to create higher-level artwork. The more I use this app, the more new tools, adjustments and shortcuts I find.

For this workshop, I'll be painting entirely using the Procreate app. The process is similar to working in Photoshop: making use of multiple layers, colour adjusting and using a variety of brushes. All of the brushes I use are straight from the Procreate library, but the app allows for easy import of downloaded or imported brushes as well. I try to work in the least amount of layers possible, so it feels more like painting on a canvas.

I decided to pay homage to classic fairy tale illustrations for this piece – in this case, Snow White and the poison apple. I love the old storybook paintings, and decided to try my take on the subject matter.

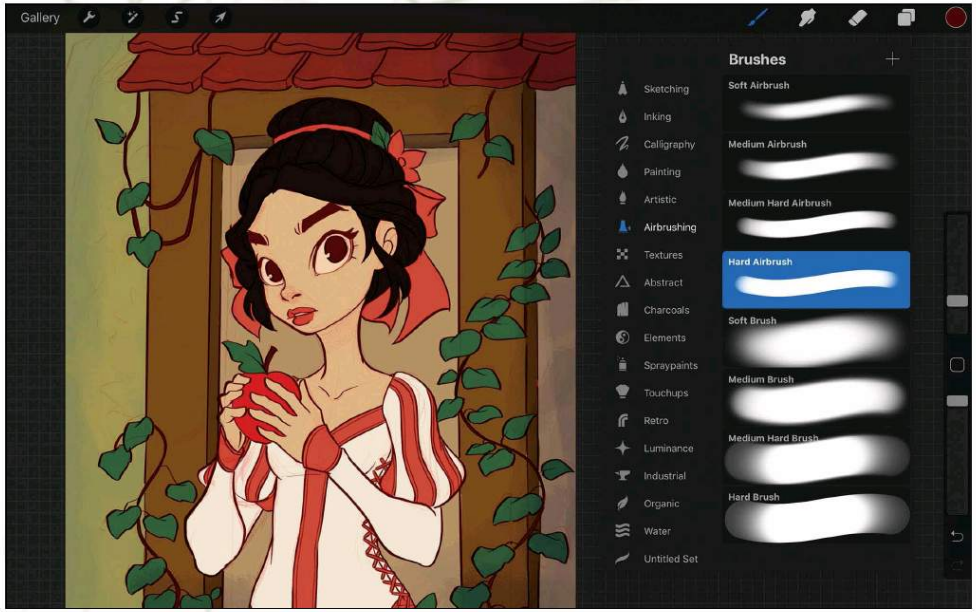


1 Start with a sketch

Procreate has a great selection of "sketching" brushes, and my go-to is the 6B Pencil brush. I loosely sketch out the concept of Snow White and the apple, not worrying too much about details and specifics, but just blocking in very general ideas. I know I can change and tighten ideas later on, so I keep the sketch simple.

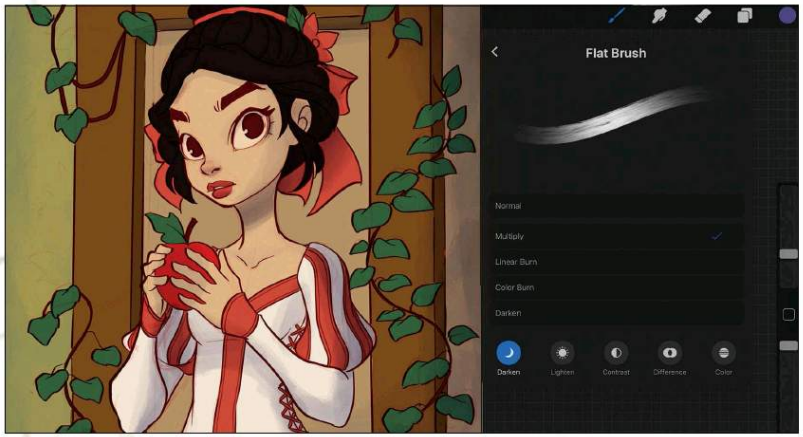
2 Refining the Idea and Inking

Next, I lower the Opacity of the pencil sketch layer. I create a separate layer on top and choose the Brush Pen from the Calligraphy Menu. I choose a dark brown colour to ink, avoiding black (for now) for a softer look. Using simple strokes, I ink over the drawing.



3 Blocking in flat colours

Now having both the light pencils and inks, I merge the two layers and set the combined layer to Multiply. Then I create a layer underneath and then fill the background with a green colour using the Paint Bucket tool. Next, I select the Hard Airbrush and fill in the very basic, flat colours of the drawing that are underneath the lines.



4 Know your light source

I select the Flat Brush and set its brush properties to Multiply, before choosing a grey-blue colour. I decide that one light source should come in from the left, so I lightly paint in a thin layer of shadows on the figure and start to define her shape. I tackle a bit of the shadows in the background at the same time.

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PROCREATE

CUSTOM BRUSHES: FLAT BRUSH

I use this brush, similar to a chalk, for most of my painting and rendering.

HARD AIRBRUSH

Ideal for finer detailing and highlights, due to its opaque and hardness.

BRUSH PEN

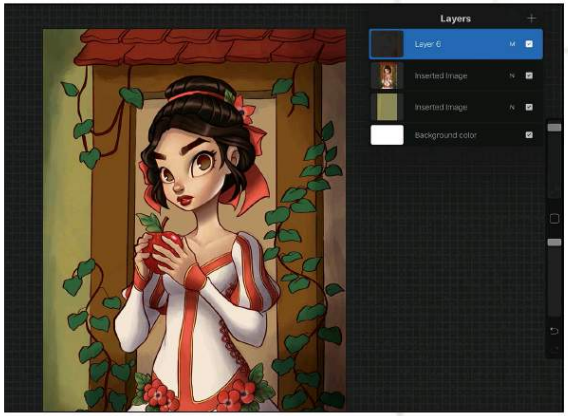
This is my favourite brush for inking because it has a variety of line weight.

6B PENCIL

This is my go-to for sketching. Tilt the pencil to achieve a softer effect.

5 Time to paint

Now that I have the basics laid out, I create a layer on top and set the Flat Brush properties back to Normal. I eye-drop the colours, then choose lighter colours to push things forward and darker colours to pull things back. I also try to choose colours that are already on the screen, which keeps the colour palette cohesive.



6 Pushing the values

Now that the basic textures are painted on Snow White's face, dress and hair, I create a Multiply layer on top. Still using the Flat Brush, I lightly go over the painting with a dark brown colour to intensify the shadows. I also make the four corners darker, which places more emphasis on the centre of the painting.

7 Painting over shadows

I like to pick a lighter colour (in this case, a light turquoise/blue) and paint inside the shadows. I do this in thin, gradual layers and build up the Opacity where it's closest to the edge or where it's the darkest. This can help to create a rim lighting effect.

8 Playing around with Curves

Procreate has different colour adjustment options. I like to use the Curves tool to play with contrast, and Color Balance to tweak the colours in the shadows, midtones and highlights of the painting. Since I'm working in one layer at this point, the adjustments change all aspects of the piece.

PRO SECRETS

Secrets of the layers

If you have multiple layers that you are ready to combine, you can place two fingers on the top and bottom layer and "push" them together. Pressing the layer once reveals different options, such as locking transparency, filling, merging or masking. Swipe a layer left to Lock, Duplicate, and/or Delete.

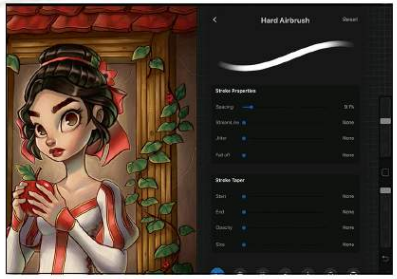
PRO SECRETS

Speedy Cut, Copy & Paste

After making a selection using the selection key, use three fingers and swipe in a downward motion on the iPad screen. This brings up a shortcut menu with the options of Cut, Copy and Paste individually, as well as Cut & Paste or Copy & Paste to speed things up.

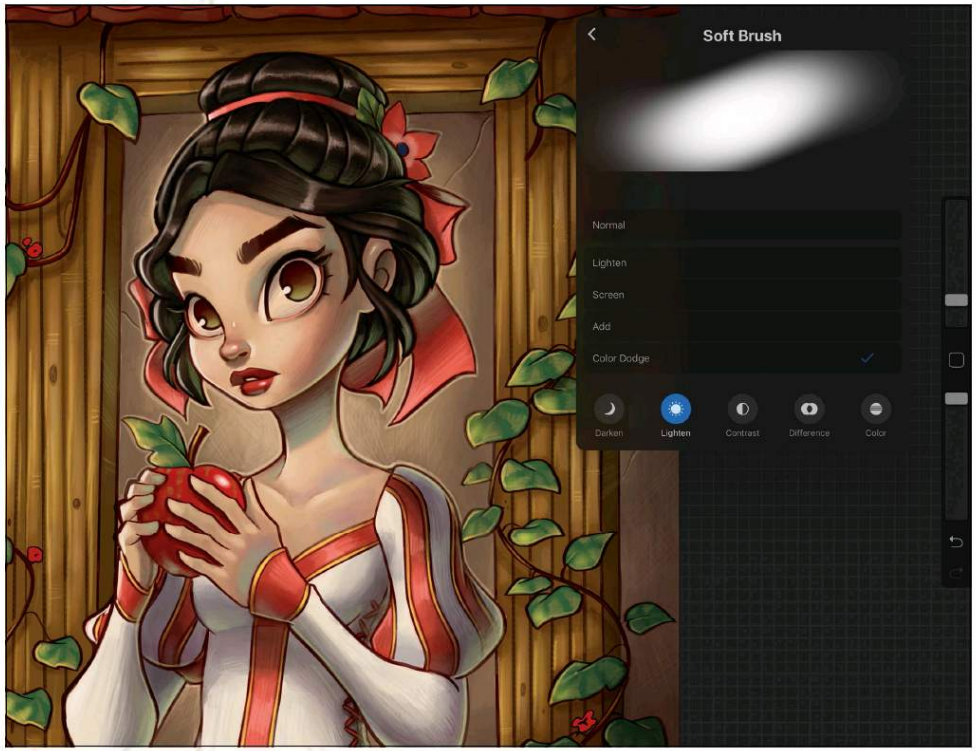
9 On to the background

Using the same principles as painting Snow, I start defining the background. I use colours that are local to the painting, eye-dropping yellow for highlights and dark browns for shadows. I slowly start to render out the leaves, roof tiles and wood grain, still using the Flat Brush.



10 All about the details

After using the Flat Brush for the bulk of the painting, I select a Hard Airbrush to focus on details, reducing the diameter to make the brush head smaller. Since this brush is opaque, I try to make bold decisions in colour and highlights, giving the painting a crisper look.

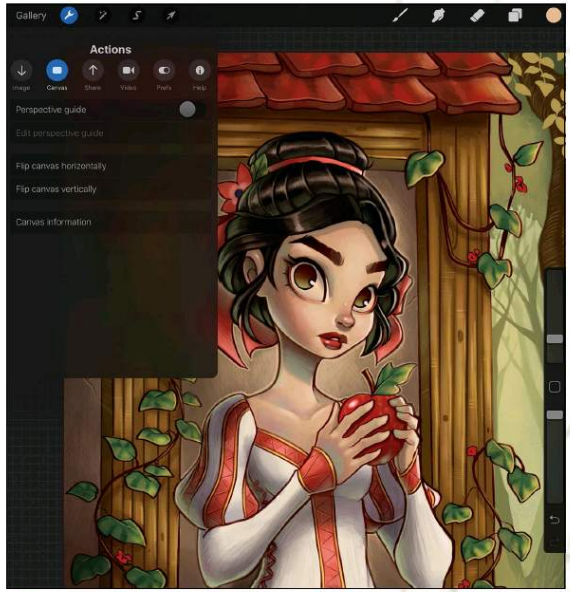


11 Brighten the composition with the Color Dodge setting

Now moving on to a soft airbrush, I pick a local yellow colour and set the brush properties to Color Dodge. Then I very lightly paint in some highlights around the leaves, wood and face of Snow White. I try to keep these highlights to a minimum to avoid a heavily airbrushed look.

12 Going a bit further

Next I switch back to the Hard Airbrush and add elements that were not originally in my sketch. I paint in some trees, flowers and a subtle background to suggest a forest location. I use the Brush Pen from the Calligraphy menu to paint tree branches and grass blades, because it tapers off nicely at the ends.



13 Adopting a different perspective

Throughout the process and more often at the end, I like to flip the canvas horizontally. If something seems off, seeing the mirrored version of the painting usually helps to identify any problems. This is also a great way to check symmetry. The painting should make sense both normally as well as mirrored.

14 Taking a final glance, before calling things done

I feel like I've come to a point where the painting is almost complete. Using the Hard Airbrush, I look for places to add minor details and make any adjustments and tweaks. This is also the point where I play with the Curves and Color Adjustments one last time. And with that, the painting is finished!

PRO SECRETS

Import files and images

If you want to drop an image for reference that you've found online, simply hold down the image, double-tap the home button to bring up the application tabs, and drop it into Procreate. This will drop and image without having to save it or manually copy. This works for brush files, too.

Core Skills: Part 5

SURFACE NOISE IN ZBRUSHCORE

Pablo Muñoz Gómez uses Surface Noise to produce high-frequency details. It's a quick technique for adding visual interest to any model

Artist PROFILE

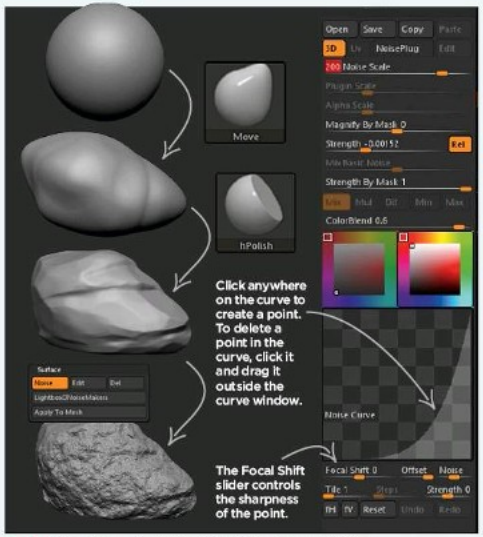
Pablo Muñoz Gómez
LOCATION: Australia

Pablo is a concept artist and animator. He's also a instructor in 3D techniques, and enjoys passing this knowledge on to his students. www.zbrushguides.com

Surface Noise in ZBrushCore is a useful feature that enables you to create high-frequency details and patterns. This means you can simulate the texture properties of a variety of surfaces, such as wood, stone or fabrics.

Surface Noise is closely related to how Alphas work (it also uses a greyscale image to interpret high and low points). However, there are a couple of things that make Surface Noise the perfect tool for certain situations. You can apply the noise uniformly to an entire area and it also works in a preview mode. The upshot is that you can see the effect, but you can also edit the details as much as you want before committing to applying it to the model.

You can repeat a Surface Noise pattern across a surface. So if you want to use a custom image (or Alpha), it helps if it's tileable. Surface Noise can be applied from the Surface subpalette within the Tool palette, by clicking the Noise switch. Once active, the settings of the Surface Noise are controlled from a pop-up window. To edit a surface noise, press the Edit button.

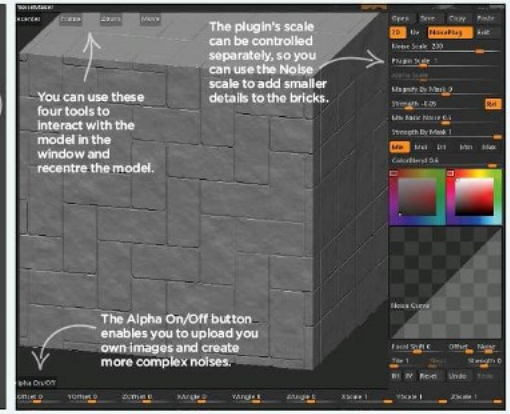


1 Creating details with Surface Noise

Use the Move and Polish brush to quickly shape a sphere into a rock. Next, enable Noise and click Edit. The scale slider changes the size of the noise and the strength determines how intense the noise will be. Let's set those sliders to 200 and -0.00152, respectively. The noise curve controls the peaks and valleys of the noise, so play with it to customise the look of your surface details.

2 Presets and lightbox noises

There are a bunch of great noise presets that you can load up and tweak to create your details. From the Surface subpalette, click Lightbox>NoiseMakers. The Lightbox will open and you can simply double-click any noise to load it and see it placed over your model. Choose something cool like Noise43.ZNM and then click Edit so you can see this noise's properties. Feel free to tweak the values of the sliders to change the effect of the noise.

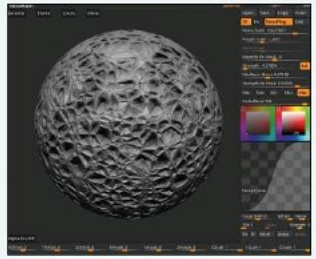


3 Working with the Noise Maker plug-in

The Noise Maker plugin is a powerful feature that extends the capabilities of Surface Noise. Load up a cube, turn Noise on and click Edit. Now switch the NoisePlug on to launch a second pop-up window. Select Bricks in the left panel, change the style pattern to Herringbone, enable Round Corners and Row Offset Variability and hit OK. Now decrease the strength of the noise to -0.05 to make the effect more visible.

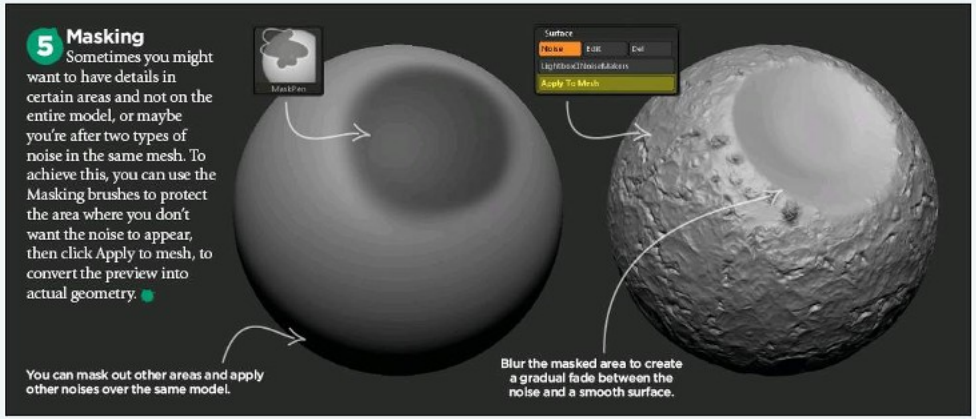
4 Noise Maker settings

In the SurfaceMaker window you have a list of generators on the left (much like the bricks that we just made). Each modifier has its own settings, but the Translate, Rotate and Scale options are common settings. The Interactive Update option enables you to see the changes you're making on the model, but if you can't see any changes, then go back to the Surface Noise edit window and crank up the strength.



5 Masking

Sometimes you might want to have details in certain areas and not on the entire model, or maybe you're after two types of noise in the same mesh. To achieve this, you can use the Masking brushes to protect the area where you don't want the noise to appear, then click Apply to mesh, to convert the preview into actual geometry.



Artist insight

15 TECHNIQUES FOR PAINTING DRAGONS

Illustrator and board game artist **Alex Stone** shares his ideas on designing and painting realistic-looking dragons with personality

Artist PROFILE

Alex Stone

LOCATION: US

Alex is an artist from Brooklyn, whose work has appeared in games such as Dungeons & Dragons and Smash Up. Lately he's been painting a lot of dragons...

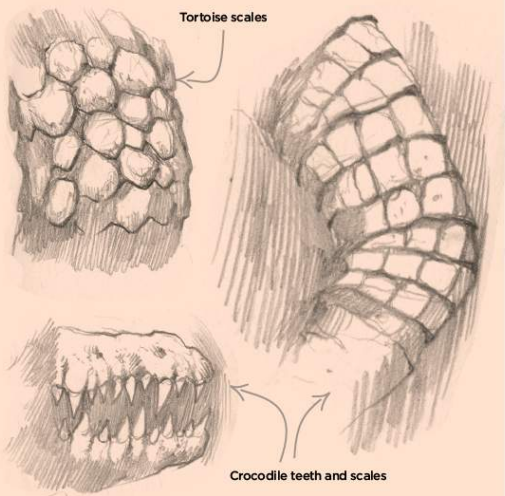
www.alexstoneart.com

Dragons have been a staple of the fantasy genre for as long as anyone can remember. So with so many out there, how do you keep them interesting? This has been my self-assigned challenge of late. For the past few years, I've been working on an ongoing personal project in which I paint dragon portraits, trying to imbue each one with its own unique personality. Some are aloof, some arrogant, some downright ferocious – and they come in many colours, shapes and sizes.

Here, I'll be sharing some of my favourites with you, as well as things I've learned over the course of my endeavours so that, hopefully, you can design some fun dragons, too!

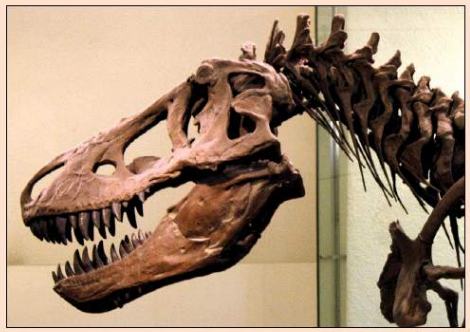
1 PERSONALITY AND ATTITUDE

The first thing I ask myself is, "What kind of attitude or personality do I want this dragon to have?" Often I opt for proud, sarcastic, ill-tempered... or some combination of all three. Keeping this in mind while I work enables me – often subconsciously – to include visual cues to convey this to the viewer. Perhaps through a wicked toothy grin, or a mischievous twinkle of the eye.



2 BORROW FROM NATURE

When designing my dragons, I take as much as I can from real life. I study the skull shape of an animal such as a bear, lion or eel, and combine that with the teeth of an alligator or the beak of a snapping turtle. I also look to crocodiles, tortoises, snakes and other reptiles for scale patterns and colours. Anything in nature that looks interesting and inspires me is fair game. Many of my dragons are a handful of real-life animals combined to create something new.



3 MAKE USE OF REFERENCE

This goes hand in hand with the previous tip, but use reference! Throughout my process, I keep a collection of various images that I think might be relevant to the current sketch or painting next to me while I work. In the above example, I knew I wanted this dragon's design to be based on dinosaurs like the Tyrannosaurus Rex, so the accompanying reference helped inform my decisions about his bone structure and anatomy. Other images I would use here include various pictures of dappled light, forests and reptiles, to help with colour, texture and lighting.

4 FIND THE SILHOUETTE

For every dragon, I arrange the major elements in a way that creates a good silhouette. This achieves two things. First, it makes the painting instantly readable, even at a distance. Second, it's simply more pleasing to look at from an abstract perspective, even if I'm painting realistic-looking dragons.

> "For every dragon, I arrange the key elements in a way that creates a good silhouette"

5 CONSIDER THE SETTING

When painting a dragon, I think about what environment they're in. This is another element that helps to imply story, as well as influencing my design decisions. Here, I knew when starting the painting that I wanted a tropical environment. This led me to decide on a colourful design on the dragon itself, taking inspiration from tropical birds and reptiles.

6 TEXTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Think of what kind of texture you'd like your dragon to have. Are they covered in leathery scales, or hard, armour-like plates? I imagine that a very old dragon would have thick, gnarly scales, like an old crocodile, while a younger one might have a smoother, more even pattern. If you'd like to be a little unconventional, consider painting a dragon with feathers or fur instead of scales. You can even look to materials like bark and rocks. Try different things!

7 CONVEY SCALE

There are visual cues you can use to help imply size. A commonly used trick is to include some birds for scale, but also consider architecture or other props. Another concept that can easily be applied here is that larger creatures (think whales or elephants) generally have small eyes relative to their size, and vice versa.

8 DEVELOPING YOUR IDEAS

Discover how to take a dragon drawing from sketch to final painting

A Pencil sketch

Most of my dragons start in my sketchbook, and are done as loose pencil drawings. When I come up with a design that I like, I scan it and continue to build it up in Photoshop, adding rough colours and lighting until I have a clear idea of how it will look when I move on to painting the creature on the canvas.

B Underpainting

Once I've completed the sketch, I transfer the drawing to my painting surface and seal it with a wash of watered-down acrylic paint. Then I proceed to block in the major shapes of the painting. I'm trying to maintain a balance between being precise in my mark-making, without becoming too fussy or precious about tiny details.

C Refinements

After I have the whole painting surface covered, I go back with a smaller brush to add detail and refine shapes where necessary. This is also where I might add glazes to adjust colour or value, as well as soften edges. This stage can be short or long, depending on the painting. It's an act of pushing and pulling until it looks good.

"Even in a simple portrait, there are things you can add to give the viewer a better idea of the underlying story"

9 IMPLYING STORY

Think about bringing in details that can enhance your piece. Even in a simple portrait, there are things you can add to give the viewer a better idea of the underlying story. Scars might imply an old dragon who's been around for a while. A flaming maw tells us that perhaps this dragon has laid siege to a town, or roasted an intruder. In this piece I took inspiration from parade elephants: the flags and decorative dressing indicate royalty and some form of alliance with human masters.

10 DRAMATIC LIGHTING ENHANCES THE DESIGN

Lighting can be used in a number of ways. I often place a spotlight on the dragon's face to draw the viewer's attention, while obscuring elements closer to the edge of the painting in shadow. Lighting can also be used to build mood. Lit from below, with its eyes obscured in shadow, a dragon will look much more intimidating, whereas using rim light can make a dragon look epic and beautiful.

11 ATMOSPHERIC PERSPECTIVE

According to the concept of atmospheric perspective, objects at a distance will appear hazier and pick up the colours of the surrounding atmosphere, thus appearing further away. This can be used to make your dragons look more massive, by including a wing or tail receding into the background. An environment with more smoke, dust or moisture, such as fog, will have more pronounced atmospheric perspective, which also makes it a useful tool to build mood.

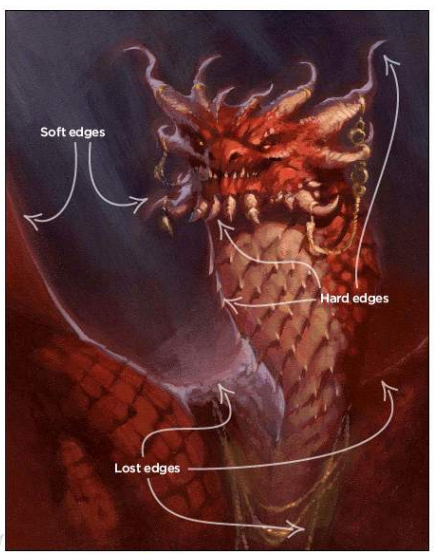
12 COLOUR AND VALUE

When thinking about colour and value, I first determine what colour I would like my dragon to be. After that, I make sure the surrounding environment and background complements it in a way that enables it to pop. As a general rule, I choose a value and colour for the background that contrasts with the dragon. For example, if the dragon is dark with a lot of cool blues and purples, I'll choose a light background with warmer reds and oranges.

13 BEAR IN MIND A DRAGON'S WEIGHT

Think about how much mass you want your dragon to have. When painting a particularly old or powerful dragon, I like to make it look heavy. I take inspiration here from old crocodiles or turtles, with thick scales and flesh that hangs down, particularly around the neck. If I want a dragon to look more graceful then I'll make it lithe and use smooth, flowing forms when designing it.

> "I'm inspired by old crocodiles or turtles, with thick scales and flesh that hangs down"



14 VARY THE EDGES

Use a variety of soft and hard edges to direct the viewer's focus and create the illusion of three-dimensional space. I keep the hardest, most crisp edges around the face and eyes. The closer to the ends of the painting, or further back in space the object is, the softer the edges become; sometimes they'll be lost entirely. Edges can also be used to imply movement. A blurry edge on a wing looks like the dragon has just landed or is about to fly off, and helps to bring the image to life.

15 WHAT POWER LIES WITHIN THE EYES

The eyes are the window to the soul... this might be a cliché, but this still applies when painting dragons! A lot of information about a dragon's personality can be told simply by how you choose to portray the eyes. I find that including the pupil tends to make them look more "human" and intelligent. Beady and glowing, with no pupil, and they'll look more feral, animalistic and threatening. A wide-open eye might indicate inquisitiveness and curiosity, while one half-closed might convey arrogance and nonchalance. Placing the eyes in shadow can make a dragon look very menacing and wicked. The point is to play with different types of eyes and find the one that shows the personality of your dragon the best!

Photoshop

MASTERING THE MIXER BRUSH TOOL

Wangjie Li makes good use of Photoshop's Mixer brush to develop a traditional look on the digital canvas, as he paints a female portrait

Artist PROFILE

Wangjie Li

LOCATION: US

Wangjie is a concept artist. He worked as a freelancer in Los Angeles, before moving to San Francisco to study for a masters degree in fine art.

www.wangjieli.com

Digital painting tools have come on in leaps and bounds in the past few years. Artists can use tablets to produce works of art at home or away, with all the convenience that brings. And it's also become easier than ever to take traditional painting techniques and apply them to the digital canvas.

I'm a young artist who approaches his work with great enthusiasm. I'm keen to take the idea of expressive elements from the Old Masters and portray them in my work, because it's important to pass on these ideas to a new generation of art fans.

I've learned the majority of my painting techniques by studying both the Old Masters and those digital artists whose art stands out from the crowd. My favourites are John Singer Sargent and Craig Mullins; you can learn much by studying their work.

Recently, I received a few questions on how to recreate the look of an oil painting in Photoshop. Although many people think the brush settings aren't important, I still believe that configuring an appropriate tool can help the artist in many ways.

My secret is to use the Mixer Brush tool in Photoshop. Artists can quickly make brushstrokes in the style of a traditional artist. I'll be using the Mixer brush a lot in this workshop. I'm happy that I can share my ideas about Mixer Brush tool and hope you guys like my workshop.

1 Produce line drawings

I begin by drawing multiple sketches. These figure poses help me choose the best one, based on the visual language such as composition, shape and proportion. In this case, I select the figure looking at the viewer, in a more straightforward pose.

2 Build the form of the shadow

Next, I create two separate layers for the character and background. Then I paint the shape of the shadow of the character. In this stage, I ignore the local colour and only capture the form of the shadows. It's preparation for using the Mixer brushes, later on in the process. ➤➤

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

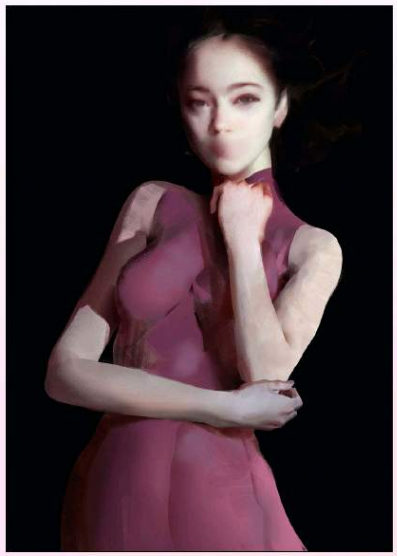
PHOTOSHOP

MIXER BRUSHES

Included with this issue's resources are my custom Mixer brushes. They range in use, from mixing background colours, to creating a sharp edge, or recreating the look of traditional oils. Try them out and see what you can achieve with them.

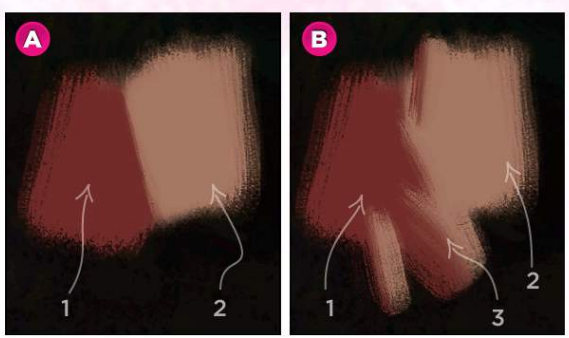
3 Adding the local colour

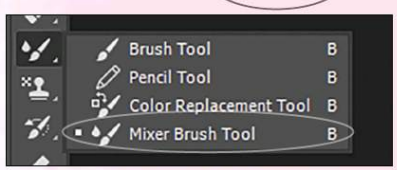
I fill in the colours of her skin and clothing. Because of the edge light, I use a brush on low Opacity to add a little green into the lightest area and a little red into the dark area, to make her look subtly different on both sides.



4 Adjust the gesture

When it comes to portrait paintings, the hand is equally essential as the face. If the face is a flower, then the hand is its leaf. Painting a portrait without the hand in the image would be like showing a flower without the leaf – it's a incomplete object. So I paint the hand first.



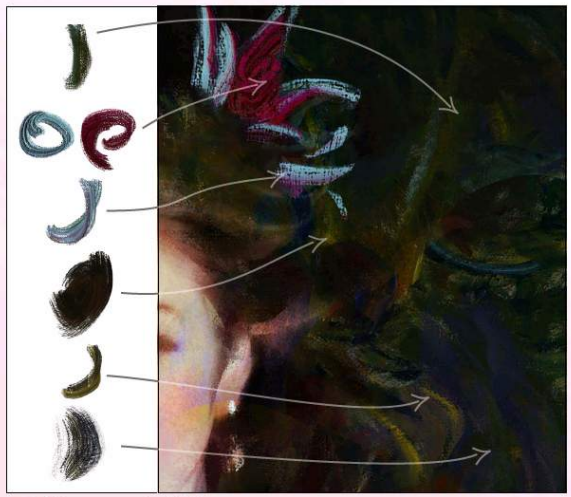


5 Using the Mixer brush

Click and hold the Brush icon in the Tool palette, then select the Mixer Brush and set it to Sample All Layers. This enables me to pick up the canvas colour from all visible layers. Figure A shows two distinct colours (1 and 2). By using the Mixer brush on the colours – figure B – you can create an effect similar to painting on a traditional canvas (3). Using various combinations of colours and brushes, you can achieve a range of real-world painting effects – see image (right).

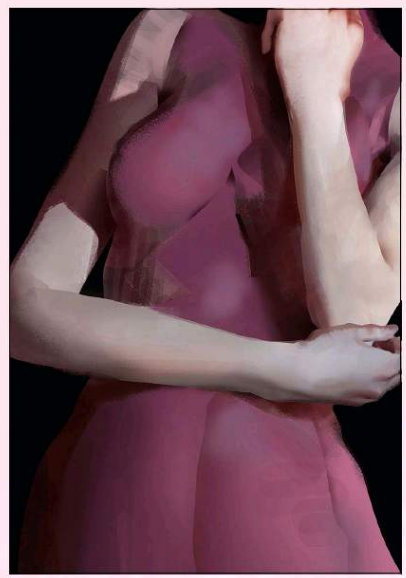
6 Fill in the background

I usually try brushes on the background area before drawing characters. In this case, I decide to use the large Mixer brush to fill the background. Sometimes, the result isn't what I intended, and in such cases I'll cover the layer with a standard brush instead.



7 Illustrate the hair

I choose a leaf brush to paint the hair and the background. I try to add some cold and warm colours to inject a bit of life into the environment, so it's not too stuffy in appearance. Sometime I'll paint the background like an abstract painting.



8 Change the outline

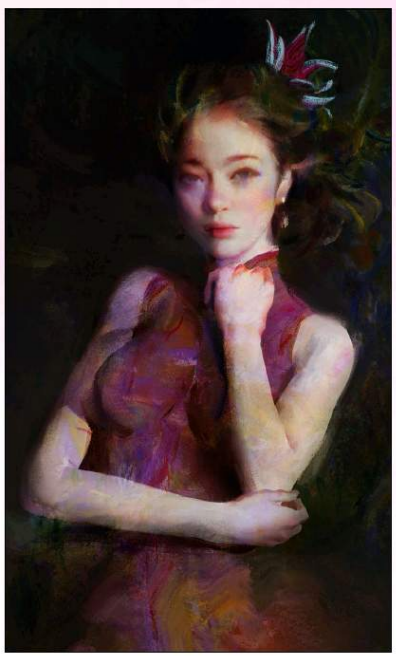
I adjust the outline of the body, to make the sharp shape softer in appearance. I decided to omit the bottom part of the hand because it'll help me to express the upper portion of the character's body.

PRO SECRETS

Limit your layer usage

In the early stages, it's important to work on separate layers because it enables you to make changes easily. Having said this, I limit myself to working on just three layers before I start to polish my image. These are the background, the shadow area and the primary object.

9 Introduce facial features
I switch to a low Opacity brush to paint the face, because the Mixer brush is unsuitable for painting details. My approach is to paint a big egg shape, then use a small brush to paint the facial volume, then use an even more smaller brush to tackle the details.



10 Preview and check the shape
By using the Mixer brush, I produced many small shapes and tiny brushstrokes. So I take the opportunity to review the form and find some ideas to finish my work. I use these pauses to manage my pace of painting.

11 Adjust the hand position
The position of her hand looks incorrect so I adjust it slightly. I change the colour in the arm because I want to reserve any vivid colours for the character's face.

PRO SECRETS

Build the form

I use the Hard brush to paint anatomical features. Many people are afraid to introduce hard edges to their figure work because they think the human body is roughly cylindrical in shape. My human figures usually feature plenty of hard edges, but then I use the Smudge tool or analyse the mid-tones to help me illustrate the curved surfaces.

12 Vary the look of the character's clothing
The colour of the fabric is the purest object in this painting. For me, red is the hardest colour to express. I try to give most of the red dress a cold appearance, only keeping a strong red near the character's arm.

PRO SECRETS

Limit your polish passes

In the final stages of an illustration, don't spend too long polishing the form to the nth degree. Instead, check that the image reads well as a whole. This is because it's easy to tackle a painting in sections, leading to areas that are unintentionally more detailed and worked up than others.

13 Adjust the shape around the head
I'm nearing the finish, now. The head still the primary part of this painting, so I adjust the shapes around the head, to ensure they're simple yet not stiff. I keep the loose texture on her right side and add a subtle dark colour to mix the hair into the background.

14 Finishing up the portrait
This is my favourite step in the creative process – and not just because I'm close to finishing! I like paintings with a sense of visual rhythm. So in this workshop, I try to do less detailing, to create a contrast between the rough and the intricate. I won't connect all the details using dark colours. Instead, I'll leave some areas to serve as a link to the surrounding tones. This approach creates ebb and flow within an image, and avoids the trap of a dark painting that just looks stiff. The rougher areas will encourage the viewer to use their imagination.

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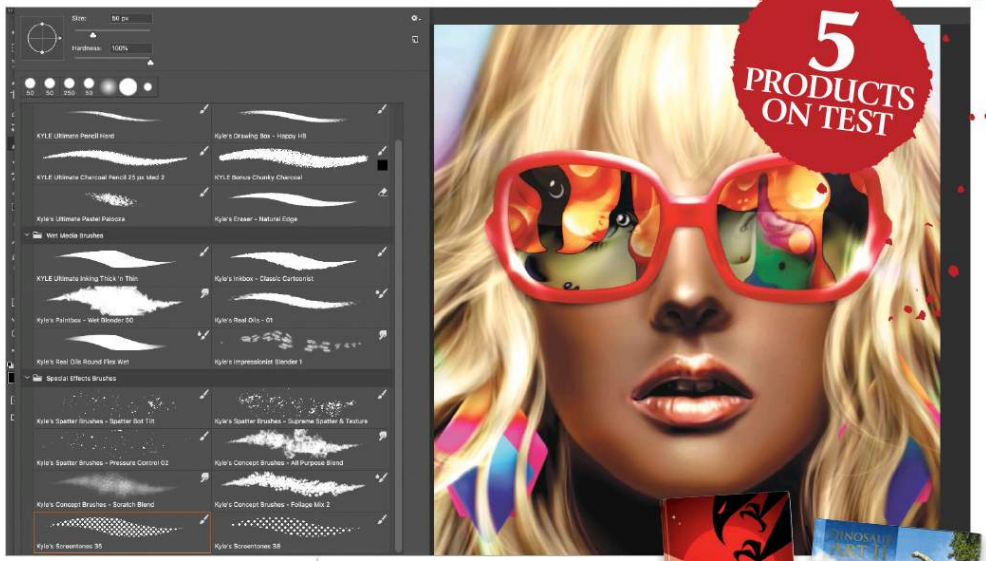
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX Reviews

Artist's Choice Award
Art resources with a five-star rating receives the ImagineFX Artist's Choice award!

The latest art resources are put to the test by the ImagineFX team…



SOFTWARE

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We find out what's new in the latest version of the industry-leading painting program.

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Alex Nice's tutorial video tackles a striking scene from The War of the Worlds.

BOOKS

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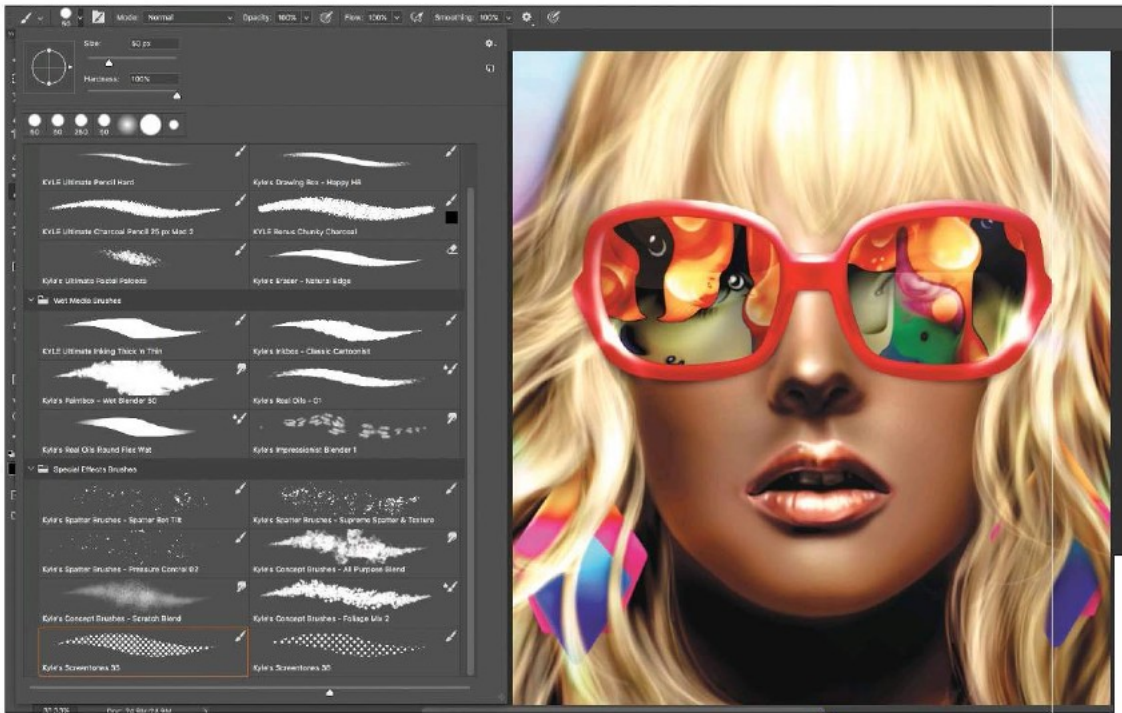
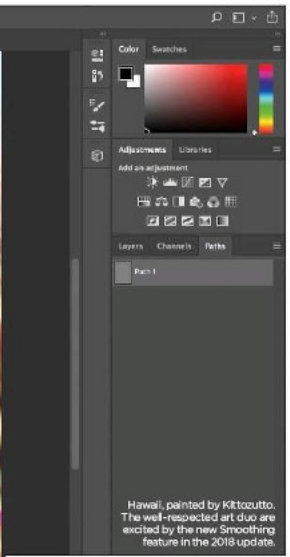
Lose yourself in the many fantasy and sci-fi highlights that appeared in 2016, with art from Wesley Burt, Karla Ortiz and more.

97 Star Trek: TNG The Art of Juan Ortiz
Illustrator Juan Ortiz gives every episode of Star Trek: The Next Generation its own poster. How successful has he been?

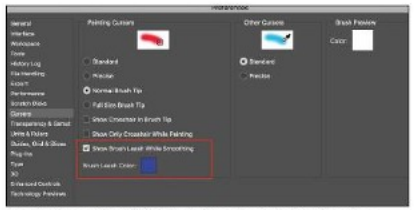
97 Dinosaur Art II: the Cutting Edge of Paleoart
This book brings together a range of artists who are applying the latest scientific findings to their dinosaur artwork.

RATINGS EXPLAINED ★★★★★ Magnificent ★★★★ Great ★★★ Good ★★ Poor ★ Atrocious





Hawaii, painted by Kittozutto. The well-respected art duo are excited by the new Smoothing feature in the 2018 update.



Go to Preferences (Cmd/Ctrl+K) to decide on a brush leash and its colour.

The new Curvature Pen tool now makes it even easier to create curves, or select along a curved edge.

There is now artificial intelligence-assisted upscaling, which helps to preserve important details and textures when resizing images.

Photoshop CC 2018

BRUSH HOUR We check out the new tweaks that Adobe has made to the digital art tools in this year's Photoshop update

MAC & PC

ImagineFX Artist's Choice

Price £20/month **Company** Adobe **Web** www.adobe.com

Gone are the days of Adobe releasing a new Photoshop package every other year, with a collection of new tools that it thinks will be popular for designers. Creative Cloud means more updates, more often, and such is the digital age that the Photoshop audience now has a voice regarding the features that the software needs.

With the 2018 version of Photoshop, digital art is the focus of what's new. Adobe rarely revolutionises its software packages these days – it's more gentle evolution – but the updates to Photoshop are most welcome, and we're confident that they'll be become part of most artists' workflows.

The Brush tool is the big talking point this year. One of the simpler ideas of the update, you can now store your various brushes into folders, which is a godsend for artists with hundreds of brush files stored on their computer. Each brush now has a name and a quick preview beside it, so that you'll never confuse two brushes again, and you're free to create your own folders, too. Given how important layers have been to graphic designers, the Brush tool's folders could well prove to be one of best updates for digital art management in years; you can even convert .tpl files to .abr within Photoshop now. Organisation within the program is better than ever.

> "You can now store your various brushes into folders, which is a godsend for artists with hundreds of brushes"

Another relatively straightforward update, Adobe has added a Smoothing option to the Brush tool. Rather like the Lazy Nezumi plug-in, you can now almost drag the brush for a far more controlled finish to your sketch; choose between 0 and 100 per cent to alter just how smooth you'd like the brush to be, and watch the little "leash" icon as you're drawing to control.

Smoothness must have been a key area that Adobe felt Photoshop needed work on, as the brand new Curvature Pen tool is similarly user-friendly and capable of creating more natural lines. The results of these features are immensely satisfying: give it another year, and you'll wonder how you ever lived without them.

Along with all the mouth-watering changes to the illustrative tools, there are other subtle tweaks across the program, which may come in useful, too. There's a Learn panel now to help beginners get to grips with tools in basic tutorials, while the Properties panel, Select and Mask and Camera Raw features have all seen improvements in this edition. There's also the option to access your Lightroom photos in Photoshop now as well, for CC subscribers who love cross-editing.

In the coming months, there'll no doubt be further tweaks related to this update. For now though, CC 2018 is a much-needed evolution for the industry standard, with plenty of new options to get stuck into.

DETAILS

Features
- New option to store brushes in folders
- Smoothing option for brushes
- Option to convert .tpl files to .abr
- Curvature Pen tool
- Learn panel
- Subtle tweaks across the software to the Select option, the Mask tool and the Properties dialog

System Requirements
PC: Windows 7 and above
Mac: OS X version 10.11 and above

Rating
★★★★★

ARTIST INTERVIEW

KITTOZUTTO

What does the Singapore art team think of Photoshop's new features?

Which tools do you use most often in Photoshop?
The Brush tool, and the masking and layer blending options. We're also addicted to the Blend If sliders. Combining these four tools has given us a huge degree of flexibility in our work.

How useful is the new Smoothing feature?
It's the update that excites us most! We were awestruck by all the lovely calligraphy produced on iPads that we see on Instagram and we can't wait to try the smoothing feature in Photoshop. We think this feature will one day be as important as Undo.

What do you think of brushes being stored in folders?
Goodbye to scrolling and searching for the right brush! The nested folders allow even more precise organisation. It would definitely encourage us more to make custom brushes, too.

Can you see yourself using the new Curvature Pen tool?
This tool is great for creating symmetrical, curved lines. It guarantees a smooth transition between the points. We can then decide how smooth we want the transition to be. I see us using it to create more naturally rounded and curved corners of complex shapes in our illustrations.

Overall, is this a good update for digital artists?
Yes – we think it's going to save us time and makes the creative process a little easier. The new Color and Luminosity mask for Camera Raw will change how we alter colours. And we're going to introduce more organic shapes now with Brush Smoothing and the Curvature Pen tools.

Kittozutto is made up of Yana and Jun. With their studio Büro Ufho they've worked for Adobe, BMW and more.

www.kittozutto.com

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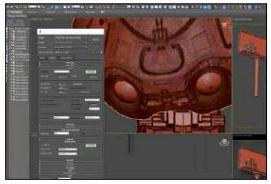
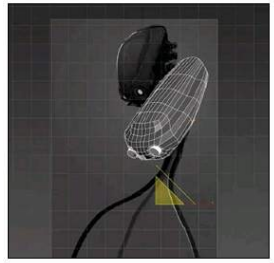
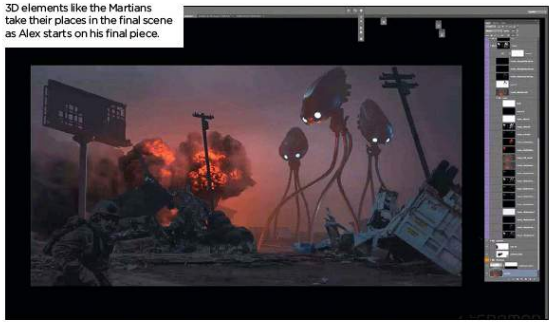




Brought into 3ds Max, Alex's sketch of a Martian tripod enables him to assess how well his 3D modelling is coming along.

3D elements like the Martians take their places in the final scene as Alex starts on his final piece.



A smoke-filled sky enables Alex to play around with colour temperature and different light sources.

Creating Key Art Illustration for Film and Games

MARS ATTACKS Professional concept illustrator Alex Nice offers a widescreen vision of how to develop artwork for the big screen

ImagineFX ARTIST'S CHOICE

Publisher The Gnomon Workshop **Price** As part of subscription package (£37/month) **Format** Streaming video **Web** http://ifxm.ag/gm-ws

Alex Nice shows in Creating Key Art Illustration how he crafts a piece of key concept art: something he's done for a succession of Hollywood blockbusters. His tools of the trade are a familiar selection: Photoshop plus 3ds Max and ZBrush. But it's how he uses them together that makes this video so good.

There are several reasons why a concept artist might integrate 3D renders into their 2D painting. The apparent time sink of making a 3D model from scratch can repay its investment if you use the model several times in the scene, as Alex does here with the Martian tripod he makes. It's also helpful if you're attempting a complex lighting set-up.

Whatever your reasons, Alex's workflow feels particularly organic compared with others we've seen. It's not just a one-way street of bringing 3D render passes into Photoshop: you'll get plenty of tips for taking 2D elements into 3D software to help you build your model.

While the section where Alex models a Martian tripod in 3ds Max and ZBrush is helpful, it's the Photoshop sessions that bookend the video that offer the most compelling insights. Alex shows you how to make selections quickly to photobash some visual elements, and goes into great detail as he polishes the artwork, explaining how he achieves a sense of richness, depth and movement. Separating elements in his scene into distinct layer groups, he plays with colour temperature, interior illumination and image noise to achieve precisely the results he wants.

Alex is very good at explaining what he's doing and which tools he's using. This is a skill that isn't as simple to develop as you might think.

ImagineFX SAMPLE VIDEO

DETAILS

Topics covered
- Value sketching in Photoshop
- Basic box modelling
- Sculpting in ZBrush
- Using 2D elements for reference
- Exporting 3D render passes
- Managing Photoshop layers
- Adding effects in Photoshop

Length
125 minutes

Rating
★★★★★

ARTIST PROFILE
ALEX NICE

Alex is a visual effects art director and concept illustrator with over 15 years' experience creating content for film. Originally trained in fine art and illustration, Alex's skill set includes managing art teams, concept art look development, making project pitches and creating film-quality visuals. Over the years he's created epic shots for Hollywood's biggest features and VR's most immersive experiences. Past films include Jungle Book, The Hunger Games, Oblivion and Pacific Rim.

www.alexnice.com

Spectrum 24: The Best in Contemporary Fantastic Art

AWARDS ANNUAL The many highlights of fantasy and science fiction art from 2016 is brought together in this richly illustrated hardback book

Editor John Fleskes **Publisher** Flesk **Price** £30 **Web** www.fleskpublications.com

Remember 2016? It might have been a controversial year, but one thing's for certain: it was a great year for fantasy and science fiction art. The best genre art from those 12 months is sandwiched between Spectrum 24's covers, in what proves to be a worthy addition to the premier showcase series.

Thanks to its unrivalled status as the place for artists in the genre to be seen, appearing in its hallowed pages is a dream come true for many, if not all, of those included in this most recent collection.

As well as shouldering the duty of helping the featured artists reach a wider appreciative audience, Spectrum 24 also includes the winners of the coveted Spectrum awards. In the book's introduction we meet the distinguished judges tasked with picking the gold and silver award winners across the collection's eight categories. These sections include advertising, books, comics, concept art, dimensional (which covers sculptures and fine art), editorial, institutional (as in promotional material), and perhaps the most exciting category of all: unpublished.

A digital piece painted by Wesley Burt entitled Saheeli's Artistry, for Wizards of the Coast.

> "There's page after page of exquisite art that readers will become lost in"

Before diving into the categories we're introduced to Spectrum Grand Master Bill Sienkiewicz, Spectrum Rising Star Alessandra Pisano, and the creator of the award statues, J Anthony Kosar. Then it's up to the book's editor John Fleskes to deliver his year in review. After acknowledging the divisions forged in 2016, he ends on a rousing note by observing that diversity is at the core of Spectrum. "Its motto of inclusion will always remain constant." A fitting way to kick off the eclectic mix of artists across the 305 pages.

Petar Meseldžija's dramatic take on the legend of St George and the Dragon, which he painted in oils.

What follows is a bombardment of over 500 works by more than 300 of the most gifted visionaries working in the field of fantastic arts. This means there's page after page of exquisite art that readers will become lost in. Each image has thorough captions that shed light on what medium has been used, which is sure to fascinate and assist artists poring over them.

With a series as influential as Spectrum it's difficult to overstate its importance. But if you want to see how high the bar is set in fantasy and science fiction art this is a must-have. Get it and be inspired.

RATING ★★★★★

Star Trek: The Next Generation The Art of Juan Ortiz

MAKE IT SO SO Every single episode of Star Trek the Next Generation becomes an indie-film inspired poster in this ambitious collection

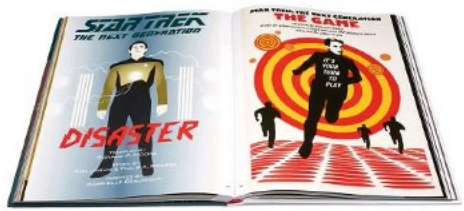
Author Juan Ortiz **Publisher** Titan **Price** £40 **Web** www.titanbooks.com

Back in 2013 Juan Ortiz imagined how every episode of Star Trek: The Original Series would look as a film poster. Now he's back with a similar collection for Star Trek: The Next Generation.

The biggest difference this time round is that Juan is shying away from the retro aesthetic that ran through his first book. In the book's intro he says that the show's relative youth played a part in the decision: "A lot of what was good decades ago is still good now. So why just leave it in the past?"

It's debatable whether the end results succeed. Lots of the posters have good ideas, but they're executed with similar elements and repeated techniques. There's the occasional eye-catching design that doesn't rely on Photoshopped images of the cast, but they're few and far between. We can't help but think Juan could've made a better collection by focusing his talents on posters for selected stories.

Detail of Juan's poster for the episode Parallels, which featured quantum realities bamboozling the Enterprise's crew.



RATING ★★☆☆☆

Dinosaur Art II: The Cutting Edge of Paleoart

ROAR MATERIAL Discover how leading palaeoartists go about interpreting the latest scientific evidence to depict the beasts of the prehistoric world

Editor Steve White **Publisher** Titan Books **Price** £30 **Web** www.titanbooks.com **Available** Now

Depicting dinosaurs is a mix of artistry and scientific accuracy. On the one hand, scientists have discovered clues to what these prehistoric beasts looked like from fossils and other evidence. But when it comes to texture and colour, we have no way of knowing, so guesswork and imagination must also play a part.

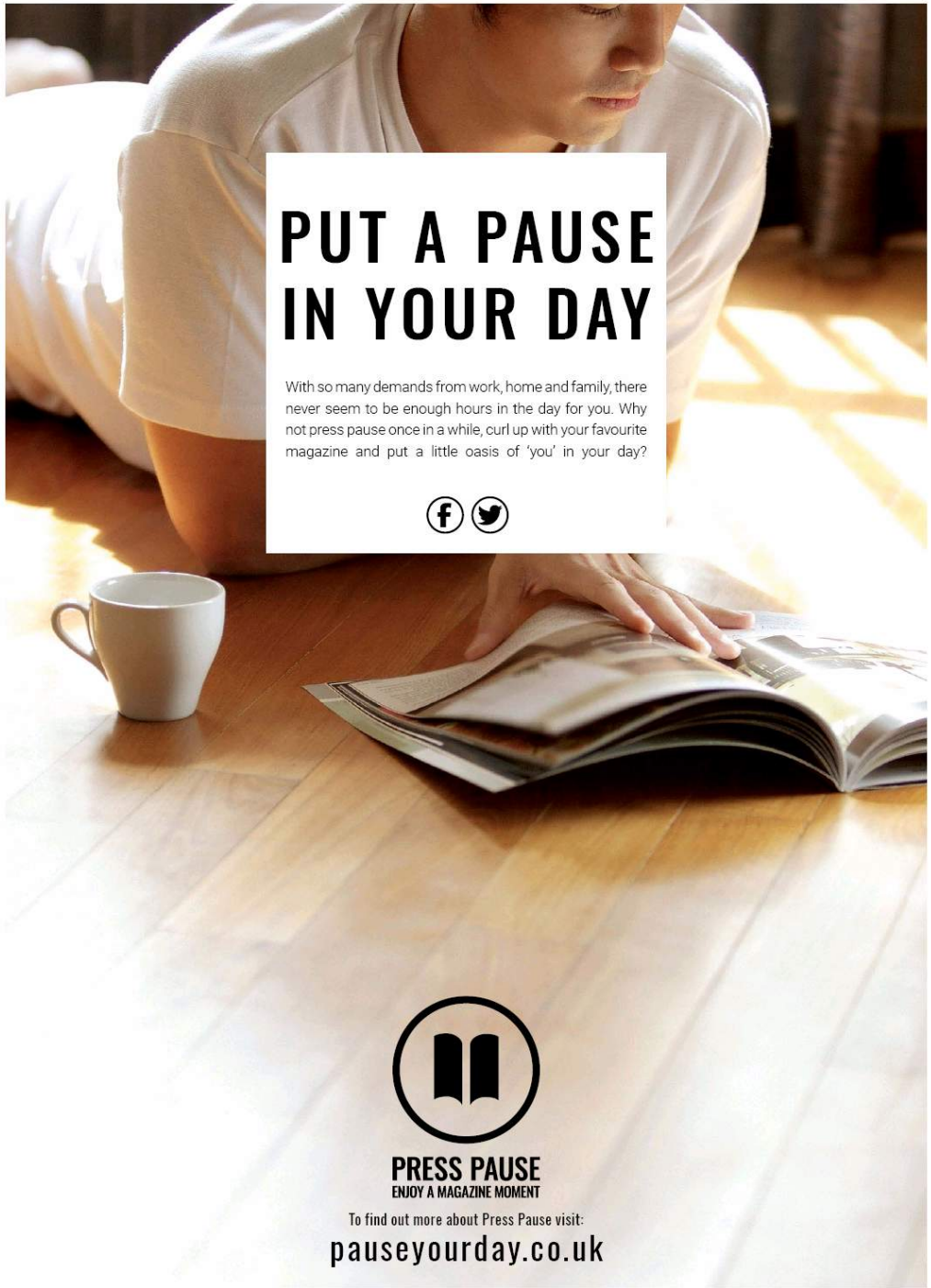
In this way, a discipline known as palaeoart has grown up over the years, working in a feedback loop with palaeontologists to bring their discoveries to the wider public through books, magazines and science papers.

Steve Wright's second volume devoted to dinosaur art showcases the work of 10 major names in this niche field. Alongside the art itself, lengthy Q&As with each artist get to the bottom of how they carry out their research, their views on current scientific controversies, and the processes they use to create their art.

If your knowledge of palaeontology is limited, you might get a bit lost: there's just a short glossary that's not particularly comprehensive. Yet anyone who loves dino art – or just dinosaurs in general – will find this a fascinating read.

Up close and personal with Peter Schouten's Appalachiosaurus, which he painted using watercolours and gouache.

RATING ★★★★☆



GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!

Workshops assets are available...
If you see the video workshop badge then you can watch the artist in action. Turn to page 6 to see how you can get hold of the video.

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

Traditional Artist

Inspiration and advice from the best pro artists

This issue:

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Artwork from some of the finest traditional artists around today.

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MrHass renders a key character from the Faustian legend in black ink, demonstrating the power of single colour line art.

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Christopher Moeller starts a new series by rediscovering the rich and astonishing world that lies beyond his studio door.

114 First impressions: AM Sartor
This artist is continuingly aiming to infuse her fantasy work with a sense of immediacy.

FXPosé

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS

Nico Photos

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Oils **WEB:** www.nicofineart.com

Freelance artist Nico has been working in fantasy and sci-fi illustration for nearly a decade: "Nothing beats the application of real paint to a physical surface."

1 THE KILLING OF A CARDINAL
"This was a book cover intended to have that bright, in-your-face, pulp feel."

2 FAR FROM HOME
"I wanted to explore the use of colour and develop my handling of texture in oil paint."

3 OH MY
"I was going for this soft, beautiful values of some of my favourite academic artists."

4 THE ORACLE
"When producing some rough sketches for this painting I came up with a sort of rotated cross as an underlying compositional device for the image."

Mary Pohlmann

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Graphite pencil, watercolour, coloured pencil, acrylic **WEB:** www.marypohlmannart.com

Mary's art combines pop-surrealistic and fantasy imagery, and depicts the messier bits of life. "My heroines manoeuvre through dark forests, bottomless rabbit holes and unkissable frogs with attitude and humour," she says.

1 FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT
"In the world of fight or flight, I'm usually a 'let me get some chocolate and a book and sit over there' kind of person. But in today's political climate, 'warrior goddess mode' is necessary."

2 MY, WHAT BIG TEETH YOU HAVE!
"Little Red never quite makes it to Grandma's with the food. The wolf is just way too easy to blame."

3 TRY AGAIN TOMORROW
"This was inspired by the Mary Radmacher quote: "Courage does not always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, 'I will try again tomorrow'."

4 FEEDING TIME
"As human beings – and especially as artists – we occasionally put our hearts out there for others to do what they may. Sometimes there's a feeding frenzy!"

Fancy sharing your traditional art with your fellow readers? Then email five pieces of your work and a short explanation about each one, along with a photo and a few details about yourself, to **fxpose@imaginefx.com**

ImagineFX VIDEO WORKSHOP

Pencil Inks

BECOME DEVILISHLY GOOD AT LINE WORK

Explore the intricacy and power of single colour line art as illustrator MRHASS renders a key character from the Faustian legend in black ink

What I love about drawing is how you can capture the imagination. It's the thing that keeps me fascinated. My speciality is hand-drawn illustration, and in particular, the creation of line work with dip pen and black Indian ink. In this workshop I'll show how I create my own interpretation of Mephisto, the demonic antagonist in the German legend of Faust.

The guiding forces in this artwork are the sinister overtones of what lies ahead for Johann Faust: the horror of eternal damnation in exchange for worldly gain. With Mephisto being the emissary of the Devil there's huge scope for character design. In this case however, my preference is to show who he is rather than how he looks. Here, Mephisto reflects upon the blood-tipped quill that's been used to consign a willing soul to Hell. His thorny fingers also hold a velum scroll, the marks written in blood that now bind Johann Faust in an unholy pact. The cape that Mephisto wears drapes over his throne, it's brimstone surface testimony to every soul that he's taken. His features are cast in shadow, giving a sinister edge his casual demeanour. It's these narrative points that occupy my mind when I create the artwork.

I start with an underdrawing, on to which the line work is inked. Through this process I emphasise anything that conveys the fantasy noir atmosphere of the tale, in particular the hard lighting. Unlike digital drawing, inking with a traditional dip pen only allows the draughtsman to push forward. It's a live take with every mark of the pen. Every nib gives a different stroke, each responding differently to pressure and speed. With practise the range of lines that can be made with a single nib is enough to create compelling line work.

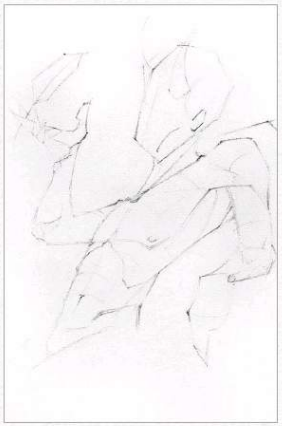
Using a single ink colour distils all the focus to what's happening in the moment. It's a mindful process that responds to what's happening on the page. The ink-work that impresses me is when a subject is handled with technique, rather than being laboured. What I'm striving to achieve is solidity and vitality throughout the entire picture, so the viewer can journey into the image.

MrHass specialises in hand-drawn illustration. His signature line work is created by dip pen and ink, a technique he's continued to explore and refine. This gives a graphic style to his work, which typically focuses on inventive drawing. See more at http://mrhass.co.

ARTIST INSIGHT

THE SWITCH TO INK

Just tracing over the pencil marks with ink usually leads to uninteresting line work. For this reason I prefer to keep my underdrawing slightly raw. That leaves room for the ink to take things further and encourages line work that looks spirited.



1 *Pencilling the structure*

Marking lightly with an overhand grip, I map where the major elements fall on the page: gestural lines, blocks, cylinders, spheres, wedges, and in this case a few anatomical landmarks. Any compositional changes are made at this stage before moving forward. If any pencil lines need to be lifted, then I use a soft eraser to ensure that the paper isn't distressed.

2 *Lay in the figure*

The blocks offer visual cues to lay in the drawing. Although good body language, anatomy and musculature are central in this piece, it's more important to capture the main idea than perfect every single detail. To keep the paper intact I continue to work lightly with the pencil, especially when using a hard lead.

MATERIALS

PAPER

- Daler Rowney 160gsm fine grain cartridge paper (A3 size)

MARK MAKING

- Derwent Graphic pencils, F to 2H lead
- Cork tip penholder
- Steel G nib
- Winsor & Newton Series 7 brush, no. 2
- Winsor & Newton Black Indian Ink

MISCELLANOUS

- Soft putty eraser
- Raised edge ruler
- Inkwell
- Small dish of water to clean nib
- Lint-free cloth to wipe and dry nib
- Lightweight rolling paper to soak up blots
- Scalpel to scratch up unwanted ink marks

3 *Light and shadow*

I refine parts of the drawing, and with the light source in mind the shadow shapes can be mapped. This is an underdrawing, so the pencil values don't matter. What does matter is deciding where to ink in full black, and how halftones and plane changes might be inked.

4 *Ease in the ink*

Inking with a dip pen requires precision and sensitivity. To warm up I begin on areas of the picture that aren't critical. That means no facial details until I get into my stride. There are no golden rules with inking, but it's always visible when an inker has found their rhythm.

5 *Between the lines*

Rather than following the pencil work, I interpret the underdrawing, as tracing often makes a picture lose vitality. For this reason I explore ways to improve on the original pencils, so the line work moves the image along.

6 *Balance is key*

As the drawing finds its shape my attention shifts to balancing the image. When solid blacks and halftone hatching are evenly measured throughout, it brings cohesion to the picture as a whole. The same goes for different line weights and textures. These are all techniques that I use to pull the image together.

ARTIST INSIGHT

INTERNAL LOGIC

Within a image there may be rubble, timber, glass, steam... each surface reflecting light differently. I strive to assign each material with its own look, so there's good internal logic. This helps the viewer register the image as intended.

PAPER TIP

INKING TECHNIQUE

Get a comfortable angle on your ink strokes by rotating the artwork, and practise on scrap paper before you commit.

7 *Filling areas with black*

I spot any black areas by brush, planning the route to avoid tide marks. Many inkers prefer to leave all the black fills to the end. My own preference is to add them as I work through the drawing, so I can respond to the illustration as it emerges.

8 *Adjustments on the fly*
With the inks in place it becomes easier to assess what might benefit the artwork. The inking usually becomes more improvised beyond this stage, so it's good to keep in mind what the aim is, and to keep the artwork legible.

9 *It's a grey area*
Good hatching that flexes around the forms can help lead the eye through a picture. As a rule of thumb, if I want to cross-hatch I avoid intersecting at 90 degrees because this can look like a wire mesh. Overlaying lines of different weights is also preferable for the same reason.

10 *Taking one final pass*
Before signing off the artwork, I like to take a look with fresh eyes. With so many details it's easy to lose sight of the big picture, even when it's right under your nose. Now I see that leaving the lower left of the picture clear doesn't create the effect I'd hoped for. The solution doesn't take long to appear.

11 *Embrace the unexpected*
As I mentioned before, visual balance is key, so when I realise that an area needs working up I let the ink dry and plan the next move. Using light pencil marks as in step one, I develop the area that needs attention. When I'm confident with the layout I go back in with ink, ensuring the line work remains consistent.

NIB TIP
LIMIT YOUR CHOICE OF TOOLS
To help make a cohesive drawing, aim to ink as much as possible with just one type of nib.

ARTIST INSIGHT
CROSS CONTOURS
Cross contours are shapes that wrap around the form. They might be shadows, edges, or even the creases in clothing. By leveraging these contours the illusion of volume is enhanced, even though only one colour is in use.

Core skills: Part 1

PLEIN AIR: PAINTING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Join veteran fantasy and comic book illustrator CHRISTOPHER MOELLER as he rediscovers the rich and astonishing world that lies beyond his studio door

For the past 27 years, I've been a studio painter. I've emerged from my basement studio after all-day sessions and asked my wife what the weather was like that day. I've gone downstairs in the dark, and come back up in the dark.

As much as I love studio painting, I've often felt my work disconnected me from the outside world. It turns out I'm not the only one. Taking one's easel out into nature is something artists have been doing for the past 200 years, and is more popular than ever today.

Painting en plein air was made famous by the French Impressionists, who advocated painting outdoors with a focus on "true" light and colour. A number of technological advances contributed to this new approach to painting, notably the invention of the French easel (a portable easel with telescopic legs and built-in paint box and palette), and the introduction of paints in tubes. In my own case, an additional crucial invention was the mini-van: large enough to hold a bicycle and all of my painting gear.

ARTIST INSIGHT

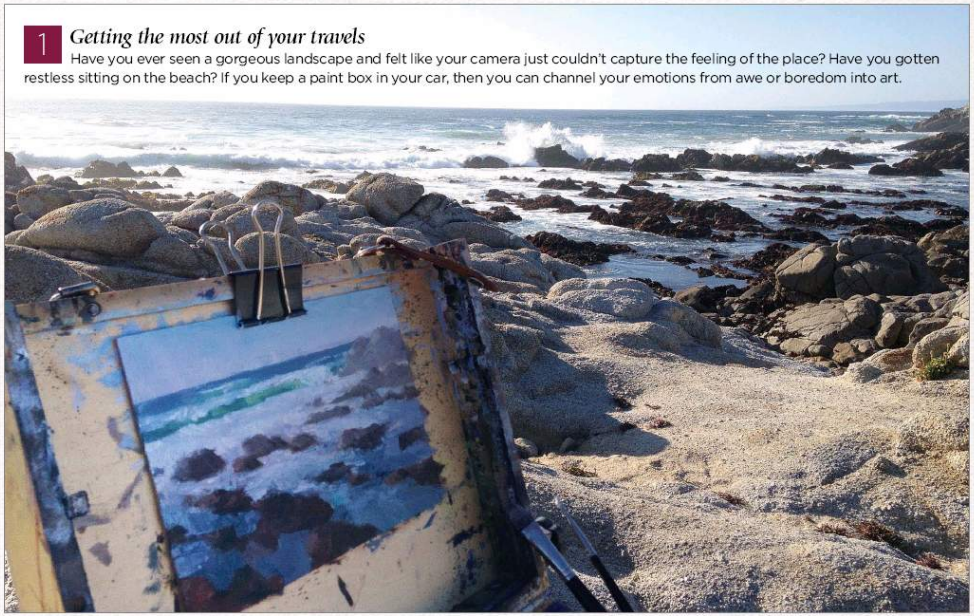
IT'S ALL ABOUT DIRECT OBSERVATION

We who paint representationally can only benefit from deepening our ability to observe, measure and understand the world that we wish to represent.

Christopher's a writer and painter who specialises in producing fully painted graphic novels. See more of his art at www.moellerillustrations.com.

1 Getting the most out of your travels

Have you ever seen a gorgeous landscape and felt like your camera just couldn't capture the feeling of the place? Have you gotten restless sitting on the beach? If you keep a paint box in your car, then you can channel your emotions from awe or boredom into art.



2 Painting outside your comfort zone

Like elite athletes, artists need to challenge themselves to strengthen their performance. Drawing with the left hand, working without reference, painting from a limited colour palette... these are all ways to nudge us out of our set ways. Painting en plein air is the triathlon of that type of exercise. Not only are you seeing your surroundings with fresh eyes, but you also battle rain, snow, heat, wind, changing light, subjects that move and inquisitive strangers. There are any number of ways you'll be tested when you leave the comfort of the studio.

3 *Making friends and influencing people*

Unless you're in a studio with other artists, art can be a lonely activity. Getting out into the wider world can add a lively social element to your practice, particularly if you choose to set up on a busy street corner rather than on a remote mountain top. There are also hundreds of plein air events all across the country, where you can work alongside, and learn from, other artists.

4 *The tools of the trade*

The key to plein air work is to set up kits of varying levels of complexity, so that when the mood strikes, you can grab the appropriate gear and hit the road with a minimum of fuss. I have a shoulder bag that goes everywhere with me. It has sketching materials and a little watercolour kit. In my van, I keep a more elaborate setup, with a chair, umbrella, easel, oils and so on. The point is to make it an easy decision if you're considering heading outside.

5 *Plein air isn't just about oil, or even paint*

When people think of plein air, they usually think of oil painting. In my view, if you're outside and working from direct observation instead of photographic reference, you're working in the spirit of plein air, regardless of the medium. This can include sketching with pencil or charcoal in a little moleskin sketchbook (very portable), painting in watercolours, acrylics or gouache. It can also include working on a tablet (look up amazing digital plein air artist Robh Ruppel).

First Impressions

AM Sartor

This artist is keen to infuse her work with a sense of immediacy

What was your first paid commission? Does it stand as a representation of your talent?
It was a long time ago. I can't remember the first time someone paid me to draw something, but the first major job I had was a chapter book for an educational publisher. It was about Susan B Anthony, so besides having a feminist aspect, it wasn't very representational of my current repertoire.

What's the last piece you finished, and how do the two differ?
My last piece was The Nightmare for Month of Fear. The prompt given was 'paralysed', but the idea is my own. My process has gone through a number of changes over the years, mostly to try to create a sense of immediacy to the final product. I tend to overwork things, overcoming that and creating an image with intention and coincidence takes discipline.

You're a child, you see a painting that changes everything. Where are you and what are you looking at?
I was more influenced by books than by individual paintings. A book that I was kind of obsessed with was My Mama Says There Aren't Any Zombies, Ghosts, Vampires, Creatures, Demons, Monsters, Fiends, Goblins, Or Things by Judith Viorst and Kay Chorao. I still think the illustrations are creepy. Two other favourites were The Canterville Ghost illustrated by Lisbeth Zwerger, and Castles illustrated by Alan Lee. I think I liked that feeling of melancholy that comes along with ghost stories.

ENDLESS EDIFICE
"This was created for the Midnight show at Light Grey Art Lab. I used ink, gouache, pastel, coloured pencil and mixed media."

> **When abrasive comments are made about your work, don't take them too seriously**

THE NIGHTMARE
"I contributed a few pieces to the recent Month of Fear challenge. This painting is on the theme of paralysis."

I find that if I'm too happy I don't make interesting art.

Does one person stand out as being helpful during your early years?
Is it weird if I say my mom? My mom is an artist, and her creativity and energy are forces to be reckoned with. She also made sure I changed my clothes occasionally, and that I didn't live off junk food.

Is making a living as an artist all you thought it would be?
I'm a bit of a pessimist, so yes? That is to say, this isn't the career choice of those looking for fame or riches. Most of my time is spent alone, drawing or painting. I'm fortunate enough to have a husband that can cover expenses, otherwise making ends meet would be difficult. My wrist and my eyesight are showing signs of wear. And yet I can't imagine doing anything else.

What advice would you give to your younger self to aid you on the way?
Experiment more! Unique style comes from experience, and stubbornly refusing to change your style, or forcing a change when it doesn't feel right, will only hinder progress. Also, when abrasive comments are made about your work, don't take them too seriously. Constructive criticism should be useful, not paralysing

What character or scene that you've painted do you most identify with?
I would have to say Endless Edifice, because I'm continually confused and frustrated with myself. I also get harassed by crows.

Do you have an art tool that you can't live without?
I like to pick up new tools and see what mark they make. So defining one as being The Thing That Makes Art Possible would be difficult. If I were on a desert island and I was only allowed one art implement, it would be some kind of brush pen so I could draw on myself. It's a habit that I never grew out of.

What does the future hold for you?
Accessing and building an audience outside the traditional gateways of publishers and agents is actually possible, and it's inspiring to see so many illustrators succeed at marketing their own products. I'm working on putting together a small run of art books that'll be completed sometime in 2018, and if that's successful I'll continue to produce and distribute my own books.

AM Sartor has worked in video game development, children's/YA books and a range of commercial illustration projects. See her art at www.amsartor.com.

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